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TALES OF
KING SOLOMON

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SOLOMON AND THE TWO-HEADED MAN.

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TALES OF KING SOLOMON

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IN MEMORIAM

G. Le J. S.

Thou camest here thyself a Rose-from-Heaven,
Thou goest back, an ounce of perfum'd Dust.
W. B. Forbush: *Ecclesiastes in the metre of Omar.*

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INTRODUCTION

THIS book is not for the scholar. It is intended for the general reader, who has heard (it may be) of the various legends that have gathered in many lands and literatures round the name of the great King Solomon, but who has never had the opportunity of reading them for himself, especially in connected form. The Biblical student, too, may find herein some points of interest; while the preacher who delights in sermon-anecdotes may happen upon one or two which will serve to point a moral or adorn a discourse. I make no pretence at having collected all the legends in existence; nor have I been able to consult all the possible authorities: that indeed would be almost too great a task for even the professed Orientalist. Some stories are printed in such books as Hammer-Purgstall's *Rosenöl*, a work which appears to be so rare that I could not even ascertain the whereabouts of a copy; while others, again, have never been printed, either in the original or in translations. Nevertheless, I may claim to have brought together a representative collection of Solomon-legends, woven together in such a way as to form a legendary life of that king; some of these are now rendered into English for the first time from French or German translations of originals.

Much might be said about these stories, but except on one or two points I shall let them speak for themselves. Some of them have been drawn from places so far apart as Ireland and the Malay Peninsula; in both of which countries, be it noted, they were taken down by

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living writers from oral narration. But the modernness of these and others in no way detracts from their interest, rather it enhances it, for it shows that after three thousand years Solomon is still so important a figure in tradition that stories are related of him. Others, again, are very old, how old one can only guess. With respect to some of them we can at least say that they are not later than a certain date. Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, relates some incidents of Solomon which are not found in Holy Writ, and he does so in such a matter-of-fact way that it would seem as if these stories were old and well-established traditions in his day. Now Josephus compiled his *Antiquities* about A. D. 93. Furthermore, he quotes as his authority for one statement certain older writers, Dius, and Menander of Ephesus, which presumably carries us back into the pre-Christian era. Indeed many of the tales, in one form or another, may well go back to the very time of Solomon himself, and may have been related about him even during his own lifetime. For the Queen of Sheba acknowledged that she was urged to come and visit him by the wonderful reports that were borne to her ears of him and his wealth—reports which, we may feel sure, lost nothing in the telling. It is true, indeed, that she declared that the half had not been told her, which is contrary to what usually happens when legends begin to circulate. But that may have been merely her politeness! But it is also probable that these stories took more permanent form, and entered more fully into the literary and popular life of Judaism, after the return from the Exile (sixth century B. C.), when the Jews must have brought with them many wild legends of heroes, kings, and gods, which they attached to the memory of Solomon.

Again, these stories obviously fall into different classes, according to subject or purpose. Some of them owe their

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origin to the fact that Oriental writers had their highly developed powers of imagination and invention stimulated by the tales told of Solomon in Holy Writ, tales which, to our prosaic Occidental minds, are sufficiently wonderful in themselves to need no embellishment. Others, again, were invented to explain Biblical texts which oftentimes needed no explanation at all. Others belong to that type of story found all over the world, the purpose of which is to answer such questions as Why has this bird a forked tail? or, Why does that plant grow in such a manner? Finally, others are folk-tales in which the name of any celebrated personage, legendary or historical, would stand as well as that of Solomon. Indeed, it is plain that in legend Solomon has frequently borrowed plumes from other kings and heroes, and they from him. Tales told of him are also related of such persons as Alexander the Great, Chosroes I, Moses, Jemshid, St. John Chrysostom, to mention but a few names. But at any rate, be they long or short, pleasant or dull, grave or gay, ancient or modern, these stories, collected from many sources, will serve to remind us that the name of the great king always has been, and always will be as long as tales are told, a synonym for wisdom, for magnificence, for wealth—and even for folly!

I am under an obligation to the following publishers and societies for permission to make use of the matter in the books and periodicals hereafter mentioned: Royal Asiatic Society (Mirkhond's *Rauzat-us-Safa*, Part I, vol. ii, ed. Rehatsek); Funk & Wagnalls Co. (*Jewish Encyclopaedia*); T. & T. Clark (Cassel, *Commentary on Esther*); S. Bagster (Hershon, *Genesis with a Talmudical Commentary*); Folklore Society (*Folklore*); Cambridge University Press (Skeat, *Fables and Folktales from an Eastern Forest*); Duckworth & Co. (Hanauer, *Folklore of the Holy Land*); Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. (Whinfield, *Masnavi*);

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Talbot Press, Dublin (Hyde, *Legends of Saints and Sinners in Ireland*); Princeton University Library (Littman, *The Legend of the Queen of Sheba in the Tradition of Axum*). The translation of the Koran I have used is that of the Rev. J. M. Rodwell. I have in each case given at the end of each chapter the source from which I have taken each episode, as this may be of use to the more serious student.

It gives me great pleasure to record my indebtedness to Dr. M. Gaster for much kind interest shown in the work; to Dr. A. Büchler, of the Jews' College, London, for references which proved most valuable; and to the Librarian of his College for the loan of books. To Dr. L. Ginzberg I am greatly obliged for a copy of vol. iv of his *Legends of the Jews* (Jewish Publication Society of America, 1913). To others who have helped in a lesser degree I am also grateful.

ST. JOHN D. SEYMOUR.

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I

SOLOMON'S BIRTH AND JUDGEMENTS

THIS was the manner of the birth of Solomon, son of David, wisest and mightiest of kings. David had forty sons, whom he dearly loved, and all were married on the same day. But on the night of their wedding the Angel of Death visited them all. And when David heard it in the morning, he said only, 'It is the will of God'. So, because he had borne this affliction with humility, a prophet was sent to tell him that a son should be born to him who should be wiser and greater than all the forty sons he had lost. And according to the word of the prophet Solomon was born.[1]

And on the night of his birth Iblis (the Devil) heard a Voice calling to him and saying, 'Accursed One! This night is born a man endowed with long life, eloquent of speech, whose fame shall spread throughout the whole world, of noble and graceful appearance, who will trouble thee greatly, and make slaves of thy children.' Then Iblis was terrified, and went and summoned his people. When the Efrits and Satans had gathered round him, he made known to them what he had heard, and said to them, 'Remain ye here, until I bring you news again of this birth'. But he thought in himself, 'This child that is to be born can come only of the stock of David, for that is the noblest on earth'. So he made his way to David's palace, where he found the festal banners displayed, and the angels standing in ranks about the house, praising and blessing God. And a Voice said to him, 'Accursed One! Joyful is the portion of Nasaja (Bathsheba). For she will bring forth a son, Solomon, whom God will make ruler over all the kings of the earth.' As soon as Iblis heard the name of Solomon he went to one of the angels, and said to him, 'Who is this Solomon?' And the angel answered

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him, 'He is the son of King David, and through his birth ruin and misfortune will come upon thy people for many years.' Then Iblis returned to his hosts, and began to melt with rage, as lead or iron is melted in a furnace. But the Israelites heard a loud Voice crying, 'This is the King of the earth, and the Messenger of the Lord of creation!' And this cry heard also the tame and wild beasts, and the birds of the air.

And when the time of birth drew near the angels flew with the festal banners, and planted them on the right of David, and on the left of Nasaja, until she had brought forth. And the child came into the world with the appearance of dazzling purity; he had a round face, delicate eyelashes, almond-shaped eyes, and his countenance was suffused with light. Then Iblis and his crew were bereft of understanding, great anguish came upon them, they became as if they were dead, and did not recover for seventy days.

But Gabriel went into the king's chamber, and said to him, 'O David, peace and happiness be with thee, because of this child by whom God hath comforted thee!' Then hastened David and went out of his dwelling, and saw the angels' banners flying, and the angels in ranks. They said to him, 'Since God created us we have come down from heaven only at the birth of Abraham and of thy son Solomon.' Then David fell on his face and gave thanks to God for the favour He had shown to him, and brought offerings. But in the morning the whole world laughed for joy, and the wild beasts drew near, and did obeisance to David. It is said that the earth did not laugh after Adam had dwelt upon it, for it wept because Cain had killed his brother Abel. It wept without ceasing until Abraham was born and came to dwell upon it. But when he was thrown into the fiery furnace by Nimrod it wept continuously until Solomon was born. And then it laughed for joy.[2]

After this manner were the future power and greatness of Solomon foretold to King David and the Children of Israel. And when he was three years old his wisdom began to be known. He took a pair of scales, in which he weighed

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his mother's head-dress against a handful of chips of wood; and when he found that these were the heavier he laughed.

'Why dost thou laugh, my son?' asked his mother.

'Why should I not laugh since I find that a woman's soul is not so heavy as a handful of chips?'

At this his mother was angry. 'Wait!' she cried. 'I will make thee sorrow for this!' So she bade her servants take him into the forest and kill him, and for proof they were to bring back his heart and his little finger. They led him away, and were about to put him to death, when he prayed them to spare him.

'Do not kill me, good servants,' he said, 'let me live a little longer. Cut off my finger, for that I do not need; but kill a dog, and bring its heart to my mother.'

Moved with pity, the servants did as he said. They cut off his little finger, and brought it, together with the heart of a dog, to his mother. But of what avail was this, for it had been ordained by Providence that Solomon should die when he was three years old. He sat down in the forest, and wept; and the Saints in heaven, seeing him, wept in sympathy. They deemed it a piteous thing that so marvellous a child should have so short a life. So they besought God to lengthen out his years. And God listened to their prayer, and said:

'Since ye desire that Solomon should live longer ye must descend to earth, and find one who will make over to him some portion of his own allotted years.'

So the Saints descended to earth, and after a long search they could find no one who was willing to give up a portion of life to Solomon. At length they chanced upon an old woman who had already lived a hundred years, and had still another hundred to live. And to her they said, 'Old woman, have pity on Solomon! Make over to him those years which thou hast still to live.'

She hearkened to them, and gave her remaining hundred years freely to Solomon, and through the gift of these years he lived to be old. And after some time he returned home, disguised as a merchant, and then, by means of a cunning

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trick that he played on his mother, proved to her that her soul was lighter than a handful of chips.[3]

When Solomon was young he practised a trade. He was wise in the art of kneading and moulding stone into various shapes, as a pastry-cook or a baker kneads dough. Some colonettes with curiously twisted rope-like marble shafts in the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem are shown as his handiwork.[4]

This was the manner in which Solomon, while he was still young, was made judge, and did more wisely than David his father. David acted as judge for his people, but after the death of Uriah, the Archangels Michael and Gabriel had appeared before him in human form, and caused him to give sentence against himself. Therefore he refrained from judging, and appointed a Cadi to act for him. But one day Gabriel brought him an iron rod and a bell from heaven, and said to him, 'God is well pleased with the humility that thou hast shown, and therefore He sends thee this rod and bell; with the help of these thou wilt be able to dispense justice in Israel, and thou wilt never fall into the error of false judgement. Hang up this bell in thy judgement-hall, and lay the rod beside it; set the plaintiff on one side, and the accused on the other, and give judgement for him who makes the bell tinkle when he puts his hand upon the rod.'

David was pleased with this gift, for now the right was always known, and no man dared commit any injustice. But one day two men came for judgement; the one declared that he had entrusted a pearl to the care of the other, but the latter affirmed that he had given it back. David caused them, one after another, to touch the rod, but the bell gave no sound for either. He made them do this several times, but the bell still remained silent, and he considered whether it had lost its power. But in the end he saw that each time that the accused man prepared to touch the rod he gave his staff into the hands of the man who demanded back his pearl. Accordingly he took this staff, and found that it was hollow, and that the pearl was concealed within it.

As a punishment for doubting the virtue of the bell it

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was taken away from him; so that David erred often in giving judgement until Solomon arose to help him.[5] And at a very early age his wisdom and cunning were made manifest to all the people who sought for judgement, as the following stories show.

The Honey-pots

A certain man, who was about to go on a voyage to distant lands, placed all his gold in seven pots, and concealed it by pouring on top of it a quantity of honey. Then he besought a friend of his, a banker, who passed for an honest man, to take care of these for him; promising that he would bequeath them to him in case he died while on his journey. The banker took charge of the pots, and the traveller set out. On a certain day there came guests to the banker's house, for whom he desired to prepare dainties made of honey. He ordered his servant to open one of the pots, and take out as much honey as was needed, intending to refill it on the morrow. When the servant obeyed this order he discovered the gold, and told his master, who searched all the pots; and finding them equally full of gold, removed it, and then filled the vessels with honey again. In due time the owner returned, and inquired for his pots; but he found that the gold had been taken away. He demanded its return, but the banker denied all knowledge of it.

So they came before King David, who was perplexed by their affirmations and denials, nor did he dare to pronounce judgement. The young child Solomon, who had been present at the trial, called them to him, and said: 'Desire the king my father to allow me to deal with this matter and I will bring it to a just end.' David consented, and Solomon had the seven pots brought before him, and caused them to be emptied completely—and in each pot were found one or two gold pieces which had stuck to the bottom, whereby the guilt of the banker was sufficiently established. This is said to have been the very first case upon which Solomon pronounced.[6]

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Tales of King Solomon

The Widow and the Wind

There was a famine in Palestine, and a poor widow came to David to beg food. David in pity gave her a bag of meal, which she took gratefully; but as she was on her homeward way there came a sudden strong wind, which tore the meal out of her hand and carried it far away out of her sight. She would not return to David, but continued on her way in tears. Now it happened that the child Solomon met her as he was returning from school, and asked what ailed her, whereupon she told him her trouble. Then he brought her back to his father, and begged him for a while to yield him up the sceptre, crown, and throne. The king did so; and Solomon seated himself on the throne invested with the symbols of sovereignty. Then he caused the East-wind to appear before him, and asked why it had snatched away the woman's meal. The East-wind answered, 'That have I not done!' The same answer gave the West-wind. Then the North-wind was summoned before the throne, and it replied, 'It is true I have done it; but I did it under constraint. A large ship, filled with passengers who were making the pilgrimage to Mecca, sprung a leak when it was in the Red Sea. I could devise no other plan than to take the meal, and knead the same into dough, with which I plugged the leak.' On learning this, Solomon pardoned the tempestuous North-wind for the apparent fault it had committed, and David gave the poor widow another bag of meal.[7]

The Treasure

When Solomon was just thirteen years of age, he was sitting with his father when two men of the Children of Israel appeared before them. One of them said to David, 'O Prophet of God, I purchased from this man a piece of ground of such a length and breadth; and in it I found a great treasure. I told this man of my discovery, and said to him, "I have purchased only the land from thee, so the treasure is thine." But he will not take it, saying that he sold me the ground with all that was therein.' So David

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said to the other, 'And what hast thou to say to the matter?' He answered, 'O Prophet of God, I purchased the plot of ground from people who are long since dead; the treasure does not belong to me.' Then said David, 'Divide ye it between you.' They replied, 'We have no need of it.' Then David remained in thought, but Solomon said to him, 'Wilt thou permit me to speak?' And he said to one of the men, 'Hast thou a child?' He replied, 'Even so: a grown-up son.' And he said to the other, 'Hast thou a child?' He replied, 'I have a daughter.' Then said Solomon, 'Let the son marry the daughter, and give them the treasure.' And all agreed to this judgement.[8]

The Trespassing Sheep

Once a husbandman came to complain to David that the flock belonging to a neighbouring shepherd had broken into his ground, and had done much harm. David sentenced the shepherd to give a portion of his flock to the owner of the land, as a recompense for the injury. But Solomon opposed this, and said, 'It would be more fitting for the shepherd to give to the husbandman the enjoyment of his flock, that is to say, the milk, the wool, and the lambs, until the ground shall have been restored to its proper state; and then the enjoyment of the flock shall pass back to the shepherd.'[9]

The True Mother

On another occasion two women, each of whom had an infant, went to a washing-place in the desert, and neglected their children whilst they were engaged in washing, so that one of them was devoured by a wolf. The women began to quarrel about the surviving child, and each of them desired to keep it for herself, declaring it to be her own infant. At last they brought the matter before King David, who adjudged—because of the lack of evidence and of witnesses—the child to belong to both women. But when they left the judgement-hall they met with Solomon, who looked at them, and said, 'What was the king's judgement?' When they had told him, Solomon asked for a sword, and

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also took hold of the child. The women asked, 'What wilt thou do with it?' He replied, 'I shall cut it in twain, and shall give one-half to each of you.' One of the two women agreed to the division; the other, however, began to lament, and said, 'Give the child to the other woman, for I will not agree to this thing.' Solomon continued, 'The child belongs to the woman who weeps, and who will not endure to see it halved.' When this decision was told to David he was astonished at the wisdom of his son.[10]

One day Solomon reproached his father for what he deemed his tardiness in giving judgement, and David said to him, 'My son, come to-day into the royal seat, and thou shalt examine and determine the questions and appeals of the people quicker than I do; for thou art wiser and keener of discernment and understanding.' Thereupon Solomon came and sat in the royal seat, according to the commandment of his father. But, lest he should deem it but a light thing to sit on the throne of judgement, no sooner had he seated himself thereon than there appeared to him over his head the Hand of the Creator with a two-edged sword, threatening him with death if he swerved little or much from the righteous judgement. And when Solomon saw that, his blood turned to bone within him for fear of the One God; and he besought his father to pray to the Lord for him, and to grant him forgiveness for his ignorance. So after that they both prayed that they might observe justice, and that they might never pass any unrighteous judgement on any man.[11]

In course of time David perceived that the judges who formed the chief court, over which he presided, were displeased that Solomon took part so often in the questions that came before them, though they were compelled to admit that his decision was always the most just. So he determined to call a meeting of the chief men of the kingdom, and in their presence to put to trial Solomon's knowledge of the precepts and teaching of the Law of Moses. For he said to himself, 'When they have seen the vastness of his wisdom

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they will cease to object that one so young should speak against both their decisions and mine.'

The Doctors of the Law knew well the extent of Solomon's knowledge, but they hoped to be able to entangle him with subtle questions. But they found that no sooner had they put forward a problem than a perfectly wise answer was given to it, so that all who stood by believed that the whole matter had been plotted beforehand between the Doctors and Solomon, and that the trial was only a trick on the part of King David to show that Solomon would be a worthy successor to him.

But in a little their minds were changed. For when the trial of wisdom was over, Solomon turned to one of his opponents, and said to him, 'You have wearied yourselves in your search for problems, through which you sought to prove your greatness over me before this assembly. But now I will ask you some questions which can easily be answered by him who possesses intelligence and reason. Tell me: What is that which is everything, and what is that which is nothing? What is something, and what is less than nothing?' But his adversary could find no answer to this. Then Solomon said, 'God the Creator is everything, and the created world is nothing. The true believer is something, but the hypocrite is less than nothing.'

Then, turning to another, he said, 'What are the most numerous, and what are the least numerous? What is sweetest, and what is bitterest?' And when he was unable to answer this, Solomon said, 'The most numerous are the unbelievers, the least numerous are those who have a firm conviction of religion. The sweetest is to have a virtuous wife, good children, and sufficiency; the bitterest is to have a disreputable wife, unruly children, and poverty.'

Next he addressed himself to a third opponent, and said, 'What is the ugliest, and what is the most beautiful? What is the surest thing, and what is the most uncertain?' And when these questions again remained unanswered, he said, 'The ugliest thing is when a believer becomes an unbeliever; the most beautiful thing is when a sinner is converted. The surest thing is death and the judgement; the most uncertain

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thing is the fate of a man's soul after his resurrection. You see', he added, 'that the oldest and cleverest men are not always the wisest. True wisdom cometh not from length of years, nor from the study of books, but is the gift of God.'

All the bystanders wondered greatly at this, and the chiefs of the people cried out with one voice: 'Praise be to God, Who hath given the king a son who surpasses all in wisdom, and is worthy to sit upon the throne of his father.' [12]

Now the king was greatly advanced in years, and men asked themselves who should reign after him. But when Solomon was twenty years of age the angel Gabriel brought David a golden letter from heaven, and said to him, 'God hath commanded thee to call thy sons together, and read them the questions which are written herein. Whosoever shall answer them rightly shall sit upon thy throne.' So he called his sons, and told them what God had made known to him, and read them the letter. This passed in the presence of the principal men of Israel. But none of them was able to give an answer to the questions. Then the children of Israel turned their eyes towards Solomon, who was the youngest. He said thereupon to his father, 'Read me the questions one by one.' Amongst them were the following:

David asked, 'My son, what is the most beautiful thing in the world?'

Solomon answered, 'When God forgives men, and when they forgive one another.'

'My son, what is the sweetest thing in the world?'

'Love, for it is the spirit of God in His creation.'

And David read over each question in the letter, in order to see if it had been answered rightly. And when he had finished, he turned to the children of Israel, and said, 'Do ye find fault with anything he hath said?' And they answered, 'No!' Then he asked again, 'Are ye willing that he should reign over you?' And they answered, 'We are willing.'

But it is said also that the people murmured against being placed under so young a ruler, and that therefore a further

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test was devised. David ordered that Solomon and the chiefs of each tribe should each take a rod, and write their names upon them. Whichever rod bore fruit was to be held as that of the king's successor. And when this had been done, the rods were left under seal, the chiefs themselves keeping ward over them. In the morning they were brought forth, and it was found that Solomon's staff had alone borne fruit; by which token it was made known that the Lord intended him to sit upon the throne of David his father.

At length David's hour came. One night, when all the palace slept, the Angel of Death came and stood before the king. David was afraid, and said, 'Why didst thou not send one to warn me that the end of my life was at hand?' The angel replied, 'How many have I sent to thee! But thou hast not paid any heed to them!' The king was astonished and asked: 'Who were these thy messengers, whom thou didst send?'

'Where is thy father Jesse?'

'He is dead!'

'Where is thy mother?'

'She is dead!'

'Where are thy brethren?'

'They are dead!'

'Where are thy friends?'

'They are dead!'

'Wist thou not,' continued the angel, 'that these were my messengers whom I sent? And now it is thy turn.' So saying, he took his soul away.[13]

While the body of David the king was carried to his sepulchre the sun shone with such power that the people could not bear it, but complained to Solomon. Then he commanded the birds so to entwine their wings, that even the wind could not pass through them; but because this also troubled the people, Solomon commanded the birds to shelter the crowd on the side of the sun only, and to open upon the other side so that the wind might blow upon the people. It is recorded that on that day forty thousand priests escorted the coffin of David, while the number

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of other mourners was so vast that it could not be reckoned.[14]

When David was dead Solomon went into his father's privy chamber to set the diadem of sovereignty upon his head. And when he came forth, wearing the crown, and carrying in his hand the rod of Moses, on which he leaned, the angel Gabriel appeared to him and said, 'God demands from thee which is dearer to thee—Wisdom or Power?' Then Solomon fell on his face in the dust, and said, 'O Lord God, Wisdom is dearer to me'. And God said unto him, 'O Solomon, thou hast humbled thyself before Me, and I am well pleased with thee. Now behold I give thee power and wisdom and insight and a perfect mind; and I subject the world to thee, so that all my Creation may obey thee.'[15]

So Solomon sat upon the throne of his father David as King and Judge. And these are certain of his judgements.

The Two-headed Man

Ashmedai, the king of the demons, came one day to Solomon, and said to him, 'O King, thou art reputed to be the wisest of all men. If thou wilt, I will show thee somewhat, the like of which thou hast never seen.' The king said, 'Be it so!' Immediately Ashmedai with his hand pulled a rope out of the earth, and brought up also a man with two heads. The king feared and was amazed at this sight and commanded him to be taken into his own apartments. Then he sent for Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and when the latter had come to him, he said, 'Dost thou believe that there are men living under us?' Benaiah answered, 'By the life of thy soul, my Lord the King, I know it, for I have heard Ahithophel the Gilonite, thy father's counsellor (2 Sam. xv. 12), say, that there are men under us.' 'What wilt thou say if I show thee one of them?' said Solomon. 'How canst thou bring such a one from the depths of the earth,' asked Benaiah, 'for the distance between their world and ours is of five hundred years' journey?' So Solomon called the two-headed man, and when Benaiah saw him he fell upon his face, and said, 'Praise be to God who hath preserved me alive to see this day!'

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Then he said to the man, 'Who art thou?'

And the man answered, 'I am of the descendants of Cain.'

He continued, 'Where dwellest thou?'

'In an inhabited world.'

'Do the sun and moon appear to you?'

'Yes. Also we plough, and reap, and possess sheep and cattle.'

'On which side does the sun rise for you?'

'In the west; and it sets in the east.'

'Do ye pray?'

'Yes, verily; and we utter your prayer, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all*' (Ps. civ. 24).

'If thou wilt, we will send thee back to thine own land.'

'Deal with me as seemeth best to you,' he replied.

So Solomon had Ashmedai summoned, and said to him, 'Bring this man home to his own country.' Ashmedai answered, 'That can I not do.'

Accordingly the stranger settled in Jerusalem, married a Jewish maiden, and by her had seven sons, six of whom were like their mother, while the seventh resembled the father, for he had two heads. The man ploughed and reaped, and became one of the rich men of the land. In course of time he died, leaving all his goods to his seven sons. They said among themselves, 'We are seven brethren; let us divide the inheritance equally between us.' But he who had two heads said, 'We are *eight*, for I must have a double portion of the inheritance.' So they all went to Solomon, and said to him, 'O our Lord the King, we are seven, but he with the two heads saith that we are eight, for he desires to have our father's property divided into eight portions, so that he may have two!' When Solomon heard them the matter was hidden from him for a space; so he summoned the members of the Sanhedrin, and asked them, 'What say ye to the matter?' But they thought within themselves, 'If we say that the two-headed man should receive two portions, perhaps the king will say that he

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should only receive one.' So they held their peace. 'On the morrow will I give judgement,' said Solomon, and that night he went into the Temple, and prayed to God for enlightenment.

The next morning he assembled the Sanhedrin, and said to them, 'Let the two-headed man come before me!' And he came. 'See!' said the king, 'if the one head knows what is done to the other, then is he one person; if otherwise, then he is two persons. Bring me hot water, old wine, and linen cloths.' With the latter he had each head securely blindfolded, and then poured the hot water and wine on *one* head. 'O Lord King! We die, we die, we are but one person, and not two,' cried out both heads. When all the Israelites saw what Solomon had done they were filled with wonder, and trembled before him.[16]

The Goose-stealer

A certain one of the king's subjects came before him one day with a complaint. 'O Prophet of God!' he said to him, 'one of my neighbours is stealing my geese, and I cannot find out who it is.' So Solomon called all the people to prayer into the Temple. When they had come together, he delivered a sermon to them, in the course of which he said, 'One of you hath stolen his neighbour's geese. He hath entered into the Temple. I know him, for some of the feathers have clung to his head.' When the guilty man heard these words, and feared that he would be discovered, he put his hand to his head to remove the signs of his guilt. But the king beheld him and cried out to those who stood by: 'Behold the thief! Let him be seized.'[17]

The True Son

A certain man of the Children of Israel had three sons; but, doubting the faithfulness of his wife, he believed that only one of them was his, but which he did not know. When dying he made a will, in which he bequeathed all his goods to his legitimate son, to the exclusion of the others. After much wrangling among

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themselves the three determined to submit the matter to the wisdom of Solomon. When the king had heard them, he ordered the corpse of the father to be brought into his presence. This he caused to be tied to a tree. Then he had a bow and arrows brought, and ordered each of the three sons to loose an arrow at the corpse; saying that he would give the inheritance to him who, in his judgement, made the best shot. The eldest took up the bow, and pierced the dead man's hand. The second, aiming better, drove the arrow through his forehead; at which he was overjoyed, feeling sure of the inheritance. When it was the turn of the youngest, he took up the bow and arrow, and was preparing to shoot, when suddenly he threw them on the ground. 'God forbid that I should treat the body of my father in so impious a manner!' he said, weeping. 'Rather let me lose all possibility of inheriting his goods.' 'They are thine!' cried Solomon. 'Thou hast proved thyself to be indeed his son.' [18]

The Theft of the Gold

Three youths were travelling together on the eve of the Sabbath. As the day was already far spent they said to each other, 'Come, let us conceal our gold in such and such a place.' This they accordingly did. But in the middle of the night one of them arose, took the gold from where it was hidden, and secreted it in another place. On the morrow of the Sabbath they purposed to continue their journey, and on going to the place where they had hidden their money they found that it had disappeared. Then each one said to the other, 'Thou hast stolen it!' Finally they went to the judge, to King Solomon, and laid it before him. When he had heard them he said, 'To-morrow I will decide the matter.' He pondered long, and at length he determined within himself to stir them up to give an answer themselves, and to ensnare them in their talk. So when they appeared before him again he said, 'I have heard of you that ye are merchants, and good judges of affairs. I desire to have an opinion from each of you with respect to the following matter:

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'A king of Rome told me of a certain affair which was this. In a certain place there dwelt a youth and a maiden, between whom there existed the closest friendship. One day the youth said to her, "We will make an agreement with each other, and confirm it with an oath, that thou wilt not marry any man until I have given my consent to him." To this she swore. After some time the maiden was betrothed, and when the intending bridegroom came to her, desiring to have the matter completed, and to take her to wife, she said to him, 'I can only comply with thy request if I go first of all to such a one, and obtain his consent, for I have sworn to it.' So out of respect for her oath he let her go, and she departed to the first young man, and said, "Take much gold and silver, and make me free for this man." He answered, "Because thou hast been faithful to thy oath I make thee free for this man, and I take nothing for my share." To her betrothed, who had accompanied her, he said, "Go in peace with thy gold!"

'But as they returned homewards they were attacked by robbers. An old man, one of the band, snatched all the gold and silver from the maiden, as well as the jewels with which she was decked. He desired to take her to wife, but she said, "Wait a little, until I acquaint thee with what hath befallen me." She related what had occurred, and then said to him, "If a young man, my betrothed husband, acted thus, what shouldest thou do, who art old and venerable, and shouldest therefore be God-fearing? Take all my gold, if thou wilt, but let me go in peace with my husband." But when the old man heard these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "I am old, I stand on the brink of the grave, and shall I do such wickedness?" So he let her go free, and also gave her back all her jewels, her silver, and her gold, and refused to profit by the smallest thing that she had. Now the King of Rome asked me to declare which was the most praiseworthy of the three. What say ye?'

The first answered, 'I praise the maiden, because she was mindful of the oath which she had sworn.'

The second answered, 'I praise the young man, her

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betrothed, who had respect unto her oath, and so restrained his feelings.'

The third answered, 'I praise the robber, who stole the gold and then gave it back again, and also would not take her to wife. But since he had given her back again what need was there for him to have returned the gold?'

And when Solomon heard this, he said, 'If this man's thoughts turn to that gold of which he hath heard, but hath not seen it, how much more would he covet that gold which he hath seen!' Then the king immediately ordered him to be bound and scourged, until he confessed where he had hidden the gold. And all men recognized the Wisdom of God that was in Solomon, and thenceforth no one dared to put forth his hand to that which was not his own.[19]

But because he was lord not only of mankind, but of all living things, it chanced that Solomon sat often in judgement upon cases in which the lower animals, and even plants and trees, were concerned.

The Man and the Snake

A Man, who was carrying a vessel full of milk, in a field came upon a Snake which was crying out piteously. When he asked her why she so cried out she replied, 'I am consumed with a burning thirst. What hast thou there?' He answered, 'Milk.' The Snake said, 'Give me to drink, and in return I will show thee a great treasure.' As soon as she had drunk her fill, she led him to a place where a large stone lay, and when he had rolled this on one side he uncovered a great treasure, which he seized. Immediately she sprang upon him, and coiled herself around his neck. He asked, 'What does this mean?' She replied, 'I will slay thee, because thou hast stolen all my gold!' The man said, 'Let us go before King Solomon, and he will speedily show which of us is in the right.' And the Snake was content.

When they came before Solomon's judgement-seat the Man accused the Snake. But she defended herself, saying, 'I will kill him, for it is written, *Thou shalt bite him in the*

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heel' (Gen. iii. 15). Solomon said, 'First come from off his neck, and lie upon the earth, for in a court of justice no one should have the advantage over another.' When she had done this Solomon asked her again, 'What is thy desire?' She answered as before. Then said Solomon to the Man, 'God hath commanded thee *Thou shalt tread upon her head* —do it!' And forthwith the Man trampled upon her head, and slew her.[20]

The Gnat and the Wind

A tiny Gnat came piping from the fields, and laid a piteous complaint before Solomon, calling on him for justice.

'O Solomon, thou extendest thine equity over men and demons alike. Fish and fowl dwell under the shadow of thy justice. Where is the oppressed one whom thy mercy hath not sought? Grant me redress, for I am much afflicted, I am cut off from my haunts in garden and meadow.'

Solomon answered, 'O Seeker of redress, from whom dost thou desire redress? Who is the oppressor who hath smitten thy face?'

The Gnat replied, 'He from whom I seek redress is the Wind, who hath emitted the smoke of oppression against me. Through his oppression I am in a grievous strait, and drink blood with parched lips.'

Solomon then said to him, 'O sweet-voiced one, God hath commanded me, saying, O Dispenser of justice, never hear one without the other. For until both parties come into the presence of the judge the truth is never made plain.'

So Solomon commanded the defendant, the Wind, to appear before him. And at his bidding the Wind came swift and strong, so that the Gnat was blown away by it. And so it came about that this case could not be judged.[21]

The Otter's Children

The Otter said one day to the Mouse-deer, 'O friend, wilt thou take charge of my children until I return? I am

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going to the river to fish, and when I return I will share what I have with thee.' To this the Mouse-deer agreed, and the Otter went away to the river to catch fish.

Suddenly the Woodpecker sounded the war-gong. Now the Mouse-deer was chief dancer of the war-dance, and at the sound of the gong he commenced to dance; and as he danced he trod on the Otter's children, and crushed them flat. Presently the Otter returned home, bringing a string of fish with him. On arriving he found that his children had been trampled to death, and he exclaimed, 'How comes this about, that my children are killed?' The Mouse-deer replied, 'The Woodpecker came and sounded the war-gong, and I, being chief war-dancer, danced; and forgetting thy children I trod upon them.'

On hearing this the Otter went and complained to King Solomon, prostrating himself, and saying, 'Thy servant craves pardon for coming before thee, but the Mouse-deer hath slain my children, and I desire to learn if he be guilty of murder or not, according to the law of the land.' Solomon replied, saying, 'If the Mouse-deer hath done this thing wittingly, assuredly he is guilty of death.' So he summoned the Mouse-deer before him.

And when the Mouse-deer came into the presence of Solomon, the king inquired of the Otter, 'What is thy charge against him?' The Otter replied, 'I accuse him of the murder of my children.' Then Solomon said to the Mouse-deer, 'Was it through thee that the Otter's children were killed?' The Mouse-deer replied, 'Assuredly it was, but I crave pardon for so doing.' 'How was it, then,' said the king, 'that thou didst kill them?' The Mouse-deer told him how the Woodpecker had sounded the war-gong, and how he had danced accordingly, forgetful of the children.

Then the king sent for the Woodpecker, who came before him. 'Was it thou, Woodpecker, who didst sound the war-gong?' said Solomon. 'Assuredly it was,' he replied, 'inasmuch as I saw the Great Lizard wearing his sword.' *

* This and the other answers have reference to certain physical peculiarities of these animals.

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Then the king commanded the Great Lizard to be summoned, and when he arrived, the king said, 'Wert thou wearing thy sword?' The Great Lizard answered, 'Assuredly I was, O King.' 'And why wert thou wearing it?' 'Because I saw that the Tortoise had donned his coat of mail.'

So the Tortoise was summoned next, and asked, 'Why didst thou don thy coat of mail?' He replied, 'I did so because I saw the King-crab trailing his three-edged pike.'

Then the King-crab was sent for, and Solomon asked him, 'Why didst thou trail thy three-edged pike?' He replied, 'I did so because I saw that the Crayfish had shouldered his lance.'

So the Crayfish was sent for, and asked, 'Didst thou shoulder thy lance?' And it answered, 'Assuredly I did so, O King.' 'And why didst thou shoulder it?' 'Because I saw the Otter coming down to the river to devour my children.' And on hearing this Solomon turned to the Otter, and said, 'If this be so then thou art the guilty party, O Otter, and thy complaint of thy children's death cannot be sustained against the Mouse-deer.' [22]

The Maize-plant

Once upon a time the Maize-plant made boast, and said, 'If Rice should cease to exist I alone should be sufficient to maintain mankind.' But the Liane and the Jungle Yam each made a like boast, and as the parties could not agree, they came for judgement before King Solomon. The king said, 'All three of you were right, albeit it were better that the Maize-plant should sustain mankind, because of his comradeship with the Bean.' Thereat the wrath of the Liane and the Yam waxed hot against the Maize-plant, and they departed together to hunt for a fruit-spike of the jungle fig-tree, whereon to impale him, but they found none. And meanwhile the Maize-plant, hearing of their quest, set to work to find arrow-poison. And when he had found it he poisoned the Yam: so to this day the Jungle Yam has narcotic qualities. Then the Yam, being

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wroth, speared the Maize-plant in turn : so to this day the cobs of the Maize are perforated. And the Maize-plant in turn reaching out seized the pointed shoot of the 'Wilang' stem, and wounded the Liane.

At this juncture the parties to the quarrel went before the prophet Elijah, who said, 'This matter is too great for me ; take ye it before Solomon.' And Solomon said, 'Let them fight it out between them, so that the rage of their hearts may be appeased.' Wherefore there was a battle between them for fourteen days. Certain plants and trees that watched the fight, or that ran away in fear, had their growth influenced accordingly. At the end of the fourteen days, the battle being still undecided, the combatants were pardoned, and a space was set between them by Solomon. The Yam he made to sit down, the Liane to lie down, and the Maize-plant and the Bean to stand together. And in such a manner has been their growth ever since.[23]

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4. Hanauer, *Folklore of Holy Land*, p. 45.
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6. Tcheraz, *L'Orient inédit*, p. 16. A similar tale is related of Saul and David in Wünsche, *Midrasch Ruth Rabba*, p. 75.
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9. Migne, ii, col. 847.
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18. *Revue des Études juives*, xi. 7. A somewhat similar tale is alluded to in Kemble, *Solomon and Saturn*, p. 106. See Wünsche, *Midrasch Ruth Rabba*, p. 69.
19. Wünsche, *Midrasch Ruth Rabba*, p. 81.
20. Grünbaum, *Neue Beit. z. sem. Sagenk.*, p. 236.
21. Whinfield, *Masnavi*, p. 170.
22. Skeat, *Fables and Folk-tales from an Eastern Forest*, p. 9.
23. Ibid., p. 13. For parallel tales to the famous judgement of Solomon, see *Mélusine*, vols. iv and ix.

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II

SOLOMON'S WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

In the First Book of Kings (iv. 29, 31) it is written that *God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart. For he was wiser than all men; and his fame was in all nations round about.* But the second Targum on Esther goes much further than this, for it says: 'God gave him knowledge and wisdom, and an understanding heart from the beginning. He looked through those who came before him to judge their differences, so that they could not say what was false before him, for he knew how to distinguish between him who was right and him who was wrong. He explained parables, solved hidden problems, and made known mysteries without end. All came to see his face, and longed to hear words of his knowledge. He was perfect and true, shunned evil, understood the mysteries of heaven, and was wise in divine things. They heard everywhere of his fame and of his wise sayings, and all came to salute him. All the kings loved him; all governors trembled before him; they desired to sit before him, and yearned to hear the words of his mouth and his wisdom. When he opened his mouth he spake like a trumpet the praise of the Most High King. To him was given a large key to open the gates of wisdom and understanding of the heart. He knew the languages of birds and of animals; he understood languages better than all nations; he instructed all schools; all countries revealed mysteries to him, so that he knew all the secrets of men.' [1]

It is recorded that *all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom* (1 Kings x. 24). Once upon a time there was a king in Egypt named Asim the son of Safwan. He was a liberal and bountiful king, revered and dignified, possessing many countries and castles and soldiers. He had a vizier named Faris the son of Salih; and he and all his subjects

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worshipped the sun and fire. Now this king became a very old man, and was infirm through sickness and decrepitude, for he had lived to a hundred and eighty years, and he had no child either male or female, wherefore he was in a state of anxiety and grief both night and day.

It chanced one day that he was sitting on his throne, surrounded by his courtiers and ministers, and whenever one of his Emirs came in, having with him a son, or two sons, the King envied him, and said within himself: 'Every one is happy and rejoices in his children; but I have not a son, and to-morrow I shall die, and leave my kingdom and my throne, and my lands and my treasures, and strangers will take them, and no one will remember me; there will not remain any memory of me in the world.' Thereupon King Asim wept, and descending from his throne he sat upon the floor, weeping and humbling himself. So when the Vizier and the great men saw this, they called out to the people, 'Go ye to your abodes, and rest until the King recover himself.'

They therefore departed, and there remained none except the Vizier Faris, who kissed the ground before the King, and asked what ailed him. But the King made him no answer. Then the Vizier spoke again, 'O King of the age, I am as thy son and slave; nay, I have reared thee. Acquaint me therefore with the cause of this weeping and mourning.' But still the King would give him no answer, and continued to wail exceedingly. And after having regarded him patiently for a while the Vizier said, 'O King, if thou tell me not the cause of this, I will kill myself before thee immediately, while thou lookest on, rather than see thee in anxiety.' So the King raised his head, and told him of the matter that troubled him. To this the Vizier replied, 'O King of the age, I am older than thou by a hundred years, and have never been blest with a child, and I cease not to suffer anxiety and grief both night and day: and what shall we do, both thou and I? But I have heard of the fame of Solomon the son of David, that he hath a mighty Lord, able to accomplish everything. It is meet therefore that I repair to him with a present, and have recourse to

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him, that he may petition his Lord; perchance He may bless each of us with a child.' So the Vizier made ready for the journey, and prepared magnificent presents.

Now God had spoken to Solomon in revelation, and said, 'Verily, the King of Egypt hath sent to thee his chief Vizier, with such and such presents and rarities. Send therefore thy Vizier Asaph, the son of Berechiah, to meet him with honour and provisions at the halting-places; and when he presenteth himself before thee, say, thy King hath sent thee to demand such and such things, and thine affair is so and so. Then propose to him the Faith.' So Asaph went forth until he met with the Vizier Faris, whom he saluted with great honour, and bade him be of good cheer, for his affairs would be accomplished and his desires fulfilled. And the Vizier in his surprise first considered in his mind, and then said aloud to Asaph, 'Who informed you of us and of our desires?' And he answered, 'Verily, Solomon it was who informed us of this.' Thereupon he asked, 'And who informed Solomon?' And Asaph replied, 'The Lord of heaven and earth!' The Vizier said, 'This is none other than a mighty God!' Asaph asked, 'Do ye not worship Him?' To which the Vizier answered, 'We worship the sun, and prostrate ourselves before it.'

Then they journeyed on until they came to the seat of government. Here Solomon had ordered his troops of men and of Jinns and of other creatures to arrange themselves along their road in ranks. So the wild beasts and the creatures of the sea all stationed themselves, and ranged themselves in the way in two ranks. The species of each kind collected themselves into separate bodies, and in like manner did the Jinns, who appeared unhidden to the eyes in a terrible form. These all stood in two ranks; and the birds spread their wings over the other creatures to shade them, warbling one to another with all tongues and all notes. But when the men from Egypt came to them, they dreaded them, and would not proceed; but Asaph bade them have no fear, since all were subject to Solomon. So the Vizier and his retinue were conducted into the city, and lodged in the

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houses of entertainment, where they were received with honour, and entertained sumptuously for three days.

At the expiration of that period they were brought before Solomon, and when they entered in to him, they desired to kiss the ground before him; but he prevented their doing so, and said, 'It is not meet that a man prostrate himself upon the ground save unto God the Creator of all things.' So after they had seated themselves, Solomon told the Vizier Faris the reason why he had come to him. And when he had finished the Vizier said in wonder, 'O Prophet of God, that which thou hast spoken is true. But when I talked with the King upon this matter, there was not any one with us, and not one of the people knew our case. Who then informed thee of all these things?' Solomon replied, 'My Lord, who knoweth the furtive glance, and what the heart conceals, informed me.' Thereupon the Vizier said, 'This is none other than an excellent mighty Lord, able to accomplish everything.' So the Vizier embraced the Faith of Islam, he and they that were with him.

Solomon then said to the Vizier, 'Thou hast with thee such and such rarities and presents!' He answered, 'Yes.' Solomon said, 'I accept all of them from thee; but I give them to thee. To-morrow shall thine affair be perfectly accomplished.' Then the Vizier Faris went to his place; and he repaired to Solomon on the following day. Then Solomon said to him, 'When thou hast come to King Asim, and hast an interview with him, do ye both ascend such a tree, and sit silent; and when it is the period between the two prayers, and the mid-day heat hath become assuaged, descend ye to the foot of the tree, and look there. Ye will find two large serpents coming forth; the one having the head of an ape, and the other the head of a Jinn. When ye see them, shoot at them with arrows and kill them. Then cut off and throw away, from the head-part of each of them, as much as a span's length, and of the tail-part of each of them likewise; so their flesh will remain, and do ye cook this, and feed your two wives with it, and ye will obtain male children.' Then Solomon caused to be brought a seal-ring and a sword, and a wrapper

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containing a tunic ornamented with jewels, and said, 'O Vizier Faris, when the two sons shall have grown up, and attained to manhood, give to each of them one of these things.' And after this he said to the Vizier, 'May God prosper thee! And now there remaineth naught for thee to do but to set forth on thy journey, for the King is day and night expecting thy arrival.' Thereupon the Vizier Faris kissed the hands of Solomon, and bade him farewell.

He hastened homeward full of joy and gladness, and on his arrival in Egypt greeted his king, and proposed to him the Faith, which the latter received together with all his subjects. Then, after resting eight days, he repaired to the palace, and related to King Asim all that had occurred between him and Solomon. So the King and the Vizier armed themselves with bows and arrows, and went alone to the tree, which they ascended. When they descended, the two serpents appeared, and the King wondered at them, for each of them wore a collar of gold; and he said, 'O Vizier, these two serpents are adorned with collars of gold! By Allah, this is a wonderful thing! Let us take them, and put them into a cage, and please ourselves with the sight of them!' But the Vizier replied, 'These hath God created for their use; so smite thou one with an arrow, and I will smite one with an arrow.' They slew them accordingly, and cutting them as they were directed, they brought them to the cook, and bade them prepare the meat with onions and spices. This was given to the wives, and in due time each of them bore a son. King Asim's son was named Seyf-el-Muluk, and the other Said. To Seyf-el-Muluk was given the seal-ring and the robe; by means of the first of these he succeeded in destroying the carefully concealed soul of a Jinn, and the second enabled him to obtain a wife.[2]

Once three brothers came to Solomon to learn wisdom from him. He covenanted with them to teach them what they desired, provided they would serve him; and when they agreed to do so, he made them officers in his court. Thus they spent thirteen years. At the end of that time

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they said one to another, 'It is now thirteen years since we quitted our homes to study wisdom here, and we have learnt nothing! Come and let us return thither.' Accordingly they made their way into the presence of the king, in order to acquaint him that they were about to return home, and had come to take leave of him. On hearing this, Solomon ordered that three hundred pieces of gold should be brought, and placed on the ground before them. 'Choose', he said, 'whether each of you will receive at my hands a hundred pieces of gold, or three pieces of sage counsel.' After consulting with one another, they chose the gold, and so departed. But when they had gone a little way on their journey, the youngest said to his brothers, 'We have taken the gold, but was it indeed for this that we came to the king's court? Be guided by me; let us return to Solomon, and obtain in its stead his good counsel.' His brothers only mocked at him, but he returned to the king, and offered to restore the hundred pieces of gold so that he might obtain instead the sage counsel. Solomon was pleased, and said to him, 'When thou makest a journey be careful to be ready in the morning, and pitch thy camp ere night falls; that is the first counsel. When thou comest to a river in flood, do not attempt to cross it, but await the subsidence of the waters; that is the second counsel. Never entrust a secret to any woman, not even to thy wife; that is the third counsel.'

Thereupon the young man mounted his horse, and hastened after his brothers. When he had caught up with them, they said to him jestingly, 'What didst thou learn from him?' 'I have learnt what I have learnt!' he answered. They rode on together until three hours after mid-day, and at length happened upon a spot which was suitable for camping. 'This is an excellent place to rest for the night,' said the youngest, 'here is grass and water for our horses, and trees under whose shelter we may repose. Let us remain here, and set out to-morrow at dawn, if God spares us.' But they said, 'Thou speakest foolishly! Thou hast given money to acquire wisdom, but thou hast acquired

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folly instead! What! Dost thou counsel us to remain here, while we can travel at least eight miles further to-day?' 'Do as ye will,' was the reply. 'As for me, I shall abide here.' The others accordingly continued their journey, and left their brother behind. He immediately began to cut wood to make a fire, and with the branches built a booth for himself and his beast; he allowed the latter to graze until night, when he gave it some barley, and at the same time took his own evening meal, after which he composed himself to sleep. His brothers continued on their way, but could find neither wood nor water for themselves, nor pasture for their horses. To add to their misfortune, snow began to fall very heavily, and after wandering about blindly for some hours they at length lay down in despair, and succumbed to the bitter cold.

At dawn of day the youngest brother made ready, mounted his horse, and hastened in search of the travellers. To his horror he found them stark and stiff in the snow, frozen to death. He threw himself upon them weeping, but finally buried the bodies, and took the two hundred pieces of gold that they had with them. As he left the spot the sun shone out again warmly, and caused the snow to melt. Continuing his journey he came to a river, the waters of which were greatly swollen by the melted snow. Mindful of the second piece of advice, he dismounted, and prepared to wait until the flood should subside. At this moment two servants of Solomon made their appearance leading two animals laden with gold. 'Why dost thou not cross the river?' they asked him. 'Because the water is too high,' he answered. But they sought to pass the torrent, and in the attempt were both drowned. The young man continued to wait on the bank until the waters had subsided, and then crossed in safety, and took the gold which the beasts were carrying.

On his return home his sisters-in-law asked for news of their husbands. 'They have remained behind to learn wisdom!' he replied, darkly. He immediately began to lay out his money in the purchase of fields and vineyards; he erected houses, and bought whatever he desired or

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needed. One day his wife asked him, 'By what means didst thou acquire this great sum of money?' In answer, he seized a stick, and commenced to beat her, saying, 'That will teach thee to restrain thy curiosity!' But, womanlike, she returned again and again to the attack, until at last, wearied by her importunities, and forgetful of the third piece of advice, he told her all. She said nothing about the matter until, on one occasion, when he and she were disputing hotly, she cried in a loud voice, 'Was it not enough to have slain thy two brothers? Wilt thou slay me also?' The two widows overheard these words, and immediately hastened to King Solomon with loud cries, accusing their brother-in-law of having murdered their two husbands, and demanding that justice should be done. The king ordered the accused to be brought to his presence, and as soon as the widows had stated their case the young man fell on his face before Solomon, and related the true story, saying, 'O King, dost thou not remember that I was the youngest of the three brothers that came to thee to learn wisdom, and that I alone returned to restore to thee the hundred pieces of gold for the three pieces of advice which have stood me in good stead?' Then the king recognized him, and said, 'Have no fear! The money which thou hast taken from thy brothers and from my servants shall be thine alone. Go in peace. The wisdom which thou hast learned from me hath saved thee. *How much better it is to get wisdom than gold!*' (Prov. xvi. 16.)[3]

But on another occasion three other brothers came to seek advice from Solomon, and these fared better than the first three. Of these, one was unable to eat any food with relish; the other could not prosper in his business; and the third could not live at peace with his wife. Finding themselves in this unhappy state they took counsel among themselves and finally said, 'Let us go to Solomon the Wise; he will direct us.'

So they came to the king. The eldest entered first, and told his grief. Solomon listened attentively to him, and when he had finished, said:

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'Go to the forest!'

The second entered, told his grief, and Solomon said: 'Rise early in the morning!'

The third and youngest entered, told his grief, and Solomon said:

'Go to the forge!'

The three brothers met outside the palace, and asked each other what the king had said. They could not believe that Solomon had given such foolish counsel, and supposed him to be mocking at their misfortune.

But at length the eldest brother said, 'Nevertheless I will do as he has advised, and see what will come out of it!' So he made his way to the forest, and there happened upon certain men who had cut down a tree which they were unable to put upon their cart. He went to their aid, and toiled so hard that the sweat poured off him. Weary from the labour he returned to his house, and ate some bread; and the bread appeared more savoury to him than any food he had ever eaten in his life.

The second also followed Solomon's advice, rose in the morning earlier than all, and went to bed last of all; and his business prospered exceedingly. Then, seeing how his two brothers had fared, the youngest went to the forge, and watched the blacksmiths at their task. He observed how the iron grew soft and malleable in the fire, so that it could be beaten by hammers into any shape desired. From this he learnt that a right blending of affection and severity would enable him to rule his wife.[4]

On one occasion Solomon taught spiritual wisdom to his father, David. When conversing with his nobles the latter frequently spoke of the other world, and was wont to say, 'Happy is he who leaves behind him children who will pray to God for him, and make expiatory sacrifices for his soul, so that he may enter Paradise. For here no man can become a saint, however he may desire it.'

The old men believed the words of David, but they were displeasing to Solomon. He longed to rebuke his father, but shame held him back, and so from day to day he abstained

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from the proof that if man does not work out his own salvation here in this life, he must not expect that his children can do it for him after he is dead.

However, one day, finding his father well disposed, Solomon said to him, 'O my father, I beg thee to grant me what I ask; promise to grant it to me, and then I will tell thee what it is.'

'My son, I will give thee my kingdom, if thou shouldst ask it, and I will not deny my word, so much do I love thee.'

'I desire that thou wilt yield me thy throne and power for three days.'

'Not for three days, but for thirty, if thou desirest it!'

Thereupon Solomon arose, kissed his father's hand, and sat on the throne in his stead. One night he called forty men, and gave each of them a lighted lantern. He ordered two men to lead his father through the darkness, and bade the forty men follow, but at such a distance that the light would be of no assistance to him. If he called out to them, and asked why they did not come nearer, they were to pay no attention to him. Whether there was mud on the road or not the two men were to lead him along as quickly as possible.

The men did as they were bid, and when David appeared in the presence of his son, his garments were all bespattered with mud. 'How is it that thou art so soiled with mud, my father?' cried Solomon in pretended surprise. 'Were there not forty men armed with lanterns to show thee the way?'

'Misfortune attend them! They kept walking far behind me! How could I then have light enough to help me to avoid the mud?'

'When the lanterns were behind thee thou couldst see nothing. And this is the interpretation of the parable: when a man is dead the alms that his children give for him after his death are like the lanterns which followed thee, of no benefit at all. That which thou givest with thine own hand thou wilt find again in the presence of God.'

'This is a wise saying, my son,' answered David. 'May it be profitable to all who hear it.'[5]

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Solomon's Wisdom and Knowledge

Once Solomon in his wisdom said, '*One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found*' (Eccles. vii. 28). As the people and the members of the Sanhedrin heard these words they were filled with wonder. Then said Solomon, 'If ye will, I will prove it to you. Go, seek me a wife, one of the best in the land, who hath a husband as righteous as she.' So they sought and found a husband and wife who were reputed to be upright before the Lord. When these were brought to the king he said to the husband, 'I desire to honour thee, and I will make thee superintendent of all my palace.' The man answered, 'Is it I, thy servant, who desire only to remain the least of thy servants?' Solomon answered, 'If thou wilt slay thy wife, and bring me her head this night, to-morrow I will give thee my daughter in marriage, and I will make thee overseer over all the Children of Israel.' The man answered, 'I will do as thou hast said.' He returned to his house, and there found his wife surrounded by her little children. The sight touched his heart, and he wept and was sore grieved. When his wife saw that he was downcast, she hastened forward to him, and said, 'What aileth thee, my lord? For I perceive that thou art troubled.' 'Let me be,' he answered, 'for sorrow afflicteth my heart.' Immediately she set before him food and drink, but he desired them not. He thought within himself, 'What shall I do? Shall I slay my wife who is the mother of my little children?' Then he said to his wife, 'Go and lie down to sleep with thy children.' When she had done so, and had sunk into a deep slumber, he took his sword and went in to her. But he found her sleeping with her youngest child on her breast, while the elder lay with his head against her shoulder. And at that very hour Solomon said, 'Satan hath entered into his heart!' But the man said to himself, 'Woe is me! What shall I do? If I kill her those little children will die with her!' So he put up his sword into its sheath, and said, *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan!* (Zech. iii. 2). He turned back again, and thought, 'I will slay her, for to-morrow the king will give me his daughter, and will make me rich.' He drew his sword again, and found that

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his wife's hair had spread like a covering over the faces of the children. Overcome with pity, he said, 'If the king would give me all his palace and all his riches, I cannot do this.' So he sheathed his sword, and lay beside his wife till morning.

On the next day came messengers, and brought him before the king. 'What hast thou done?' demanded Solomon. 'Hast thou accomplished that which I commanded thee?' 'May it please the King!' replied the man, 'may he not be wroth with me! I have made the attempt, not once but twice, but I could not find it in my heart to accomplish the deed.' Thereupon spoke Solomon, '*One man among a thousand have I found.*'

After a lapse of thirty days, Solomon sent for the man's wife and had her brought before him, and said unto her, 'Dost thou love thy husband?' She answered, 'If it please the King.' Then said Solomon, 'I have heard of thy great beauty, and have a desire to thee, to take thee to wife, to exalt thee above all in the kingdom, and to deck thee with gold from thy head to thy feet.' The wife said, 'All that is thy pleasure will I do.'

The king answered: 'One thing only is between us, which I cannot set aside. Thou hast a husband.' Then the woman asked him, 'What shall I do?' He answered, 'If thou slay thy husband I will make thee my wife and set thee above all in the kingdom.' And the woman said to him, 'It shall be done as the king hath said.'

But Solomon thought within himself, 'If this woman should indeed attempt to slay her husband, what shall I do to prevent her?' So he gave her a sword of tin, and said, 'Slay him with this, and as soon as it touches his neck it will cut through it.'

The woman returned home with the sword, and when her husband came in she went to him, embraced and kissed him, and said to him, 'My lord, crown of my head, repose thyself.' When the man heard this he rejoiced greatly, and lay down with no thought of evil in his heart. Immediately she brought in a dish of food, and they ate and drank. The husband drank until he was intoxicated, and then fell

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into a deep sleep. When she saw him thus, she plucked up courage, drew out the sword which Solomon had given her, and struck at him with it. The man awoke from sleep, looked up, and saw his wife standing before him as if to slay him. He said to her, 'Who hath given thee this sword? Whose work is this? If thou dost not answer me, I will cut thee into little pieces!' She related the course of events in these words, 'King Solomon hath commanded me!' 'Fear not!' he said, in order to calm her. In the morning the man went with his wife to the king, before whom the Sanhedrin was sitting. When Solomon saw them coming he broke into laughter. He said to them, 'Tell me what hath befallen each of you.' They said, 'Thus and thus.' Then the husband continued, 'When I awoke, I found my wife standing before me with the intention of killing me, which surely she would have done had not the sword been made of tin. I had pity on her, but she had not pity on me.' 'I knew that thy wife would have no pity,' rejoined Solomon, 'therefore I gave her a sword of tin!' And when the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they said, 'True are the words of Solomon, *One man among a thousand have I found: but a woman among all those have I not found.*'[6]

On a certain occasion Solomon prevented David from committing evil. A certain wretched poor man with seven children came one day to David to ask for alms. David had just finished distributing alms, and had nothing to give, so he commanded that the man should be hanged; but Solomon stayed him. Then the poor man said, 'Since thou hast nothing to give, at least give me thy blessing into the bosom of my cloak, so that I may carry it to my house.' David then gave the blessing, and the poor man gathered up his cloak about him, for he felt that he had a burden in it. When he came to his house he washed the cloak in a certain well that was in his garden, and immediately the well became full of fine fish, which he sold for a considerable sum of money, and thereby became very prosperous. He hung the cloak to

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dry on a withered apple-tree, and immediately it became covered with the finest apples, while on the very summit of it there appeared three enormous red-gold apples. The poor man brought of the fruit, and the three apples, to David for a gift, and told the story to him and Solomon. David then divided the golden apples, that is to say, one for himself, one for Solomon, and one for the poor man. And Solomon said, 'That was better than hanging him, which was in thy heart.'[7]

Of great interest are the tales, both ancient and medieval, which represent Solomon's wisdom and power failing him in various ways. Some of these shall now be related.

It is recorded that a contest of wits took place between Solomon and Hiram, King of Tyre. Solomon sent him certain problems to be solved, and desired that he would send others back for him to solve, and the one who could not solve the problems propounded should pay money to him that propounded them. To this Hiram agreed, but as he was unable to answer rightly he was obliged to pay much money as a penalty. Subsequently he called to his aid a certain native of Tyre, named Abdemon, young in years, but old in wisdom, who not only solved the problems for his master, but even framed others which Solomon, with all his wisdom, could not solve, so that he was compelled to restore to Hiram a large part of the money. On account of this success, Hiram boasted that he was wiser than the Great King; but the latter, in order to prove his superior power, sent a demon who conducted Hiram through the seven dwellings of Hell, and then brought him out again safely. After this adventure, Hiram wrote letters to Solomon, in which he acquainted him with what he had seen in his journey. And this is what is referred to in the words in 1 Kings v. 12, *And there was peace between Hiram and Solomon.*[8]

Amongst the curiosities of literature are the dialogues between Solomon and Saturn, which are preserved in Anglo-Saxon only. They occur in two forms. The first is partly in verse and partly in prose, and may be based on

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the apocryphal *Contradictio Salomonis*, of which only the title is known. The second is in the form of a catechism; in it Saturn propounds many questions to Solomon, who answers them all.

But closely connected with these are the dialogues between Solomon and Marcolphus, found in almost every language of Europe, in which Solomon meets more than his match in cunning wisdom.

One day, as Solomon sat upon his throne, a coarse clownish man came into his presence, accompanied by a foul, sluttish wife. This was Marcolphus, and when he named himself, the king said to him, 'I have heard of thee that thou art a cunning man full of words. Let us have a contest of wisdom, and if thou art able to answer me I will endow thee with riches.' To this Marcolphus agreed. Solomon began the contest by certain moral commonplaces, and by some of his own Biblical proverbs, which were immediately paralleled or contradicted in the very coarsest terms by Marcolphus. At length the king was completely exhausted, and proposed to discontinue the trial, but Marcolphus declared himself ready to go on, and called upon Solomon to confess himself beaten, and to give the promised rewards. The king's councillors were for driving Marcolphus out of the court; but the king interposed, performed his promise, and dismissed his adversary with gifts. Marcolphus left the court with the sage remark, '*Ubi non est Lex, ibi non est Rex.*' [Where there is no law there is no king.]

Solomon was out hunting one day, when he came suddenly upon Marcolphus's hut, and went to see him, receiving a number of riddling problems which completely foiled him, and for the solution of which he had to refer to their proposer. He departed, however, in good humour, desiring Marcolphus to come the next day to court, and bring with him a pail of fresh milk and curds from the cow. This Marcolphus did, but falling hungry on the road, ate the curds, and covered up the milk with cow dung. The king, in anger, asked where the curds were; Marcolphus told him what he had done, and added, that what he had used to cover the milk was also curd from the cow. The king

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condemned him to sit up all night in his company, threatening him with death if he should fall asleep. This Marcolphus did, and snored aloud. Solomon asked, 'Sleepest thou?' Marcolphus replied, 'No, I am thinking!' 'What thinkest thou?' 'That there are as many vertebrae in the hare's tail as in his backbone.' This occurred over and over again, until Marcolphus had enunciated the following propositions:

There are as many white as black feathers in a magpie.
There is nothing whiter than daylight; daylight is whiter than milk.
Nothing can safely be entrusted to a woman.
Nature is stronger than education.

All of which he was commanded to prove true in the morning, on pain of death.

When the king slept, Marcolphus went off and told his sister, Fudasa, that he intended to murder Solomon, but made her swear to keep the matter secret. In the morning a hare and a magpie were brought, and Marcolphus was proved to be in the right. Meanwhile he placed a pan of milk in a dark closet, and suddenly called the king to him. On entering, Solomon stepped into the milk, splashed his clothes, and very nearly fell. In a rage he asked the meaning of this, and was then told that it was for the purpose of proving that milk is not whiter than daylight. Then Marcolphus cited Fudasa before the king, and accused her of many crimes, to which she answered by revealing his secret communication to her, thus proving the truth of his maxim regarding woman's secrecy. There remained but one more proposition: Solomon had a cat which was trained to sit upon the table, and hold a lighted candle in its front paws during the king's supper. When all were seated, and the cat was at her post, Marcolphus threw a mouse at her feet; she did not move, and a second was thrown, until finally, when a third was let loose, she dropped the candle, and gave chase. This proved that nature is stronger than education. Solomon then had him thrust out of doors, and directed that the dogs should be let loose upon him should he return. The next day, however,

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SOLOMON AND MARCOLPHUS.

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Marcolphus returned, and having provided himself with a hare, threw it to the dogs, himself passing unhurt into the king's presence. After playing one or two other tricks, and setting all the women in Jerusalem against Solomon, he was dismissed from the court, and the king said to him, 'Never let me look upon your ugly face again!' Marcolphus, however, was determined not to part thus; on a snowy night he contrived to make a most extraordinary track, which in the morning allured the king and his courtiers to follow it into the forest, in the hope of taking some strange wild animal. It led them to a hollow tree, in which Marcolphus had so disposed himself that Solomon could only see his back. The king immediately ordered him to be hanged; but being adjured to allow him to choose his own tree, granted the request. It will readily be conjectured that Marcolphus was hard to please in this respect. He led his guards backwards and forwards over half Palestine, and found never a tree to his liking, until at length he so thoroughly wearied them that, upon his promising them not to come to the court again, they dismissed him unhurt.[9]

The following tale, ultimately based, no doubt, on the Marcolphus legend, is of interest. Solomon's mother was once very ill, and it was his custom to send a man to watch her every night. The watcher had to come before sunrise to report upon her health to her son, and he who was so unfortunate as to bring the news of her death was to have his head cut off, and stuck upon a spear that was over the door of the palace. Many men went, receiving each of them five pieces of gold for their work. At length it came to the turn of a certain widow's son, and on the night of his watch it was reported that the king's mother was near death. Then great fear came upon the widow's son, for he dreaded lest his hours were numbered. As he went weeping on his way, he met with a half-wit, who asked him what ailed him. He spoke of his trouble, and the half-wit offered to go and watch in his stead, if he would give him the five pieces of gold; to which he gladly assented.

So the half-wit went to watch the king's mother, but when he came into the room he found her in the last agony.

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He watched until after midnight, when he heard a noise at the entrance-door, and on rising and going out he beheld a man looking in through the window. Now this was a servant in whom Solomon put great trust, and he sent him every night privately to bring word if the watcher was doing his business right. But none of the watchers except the half-wit had perceived this man. There was a sword hanging up on the wall, which the half-wit took down, and then opened the door. The servant made as if he would enter, but as soon as he had thrust in his head the half-wit drew the sword and cut it off. Shortly after this Solomon's mother died.

The king was troubled for his servant, because he had not come with tidings, as was his wont. And when day broke the widow's son had not come to Solomon before sunrise, as the other watchers had done. Solomon kept looking through the window, and at length he espied the widow's son—as he thought—coming towards the palace to make his report. And when he had entered and saluted Solomon, the half-wit said :

'O King, I crave pardon ! I struck off thy servant's hat yesterday ! '

'It is granted ! ' Solomon answered.

'But, O best of Kings, his head was with it ! '

And as Solomon had pardoned the deed, he could not go back on his word.

The king asked : 'Hast thou any other tidings ? '

'God's brightness is on the earth.'

'Then the sun is risen,' said Solomon.

'It is,' he replied, 'and the stones that were yesterday above are to-day going below the surface.'

'Then the plough is ploughing,' said Solomon.

'It is,' he replied, 'and the first house in which thou wert reared is overthrown.'

The king said, 'Then my mother is dead.'

'She is,' said the half-wit.

'Then I shall set thy head upon the spear ! '

'Not so, O King,' was the answer. 'For thou thyself hast first said that she was dead ! ' And Solomon saw that this

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was indeed true; and the half-wit had overcome him in wisdom.[10]

Other tales represent Solomon's power as not being so great as he believes it to be, in consequence of which he is unable to achieve his purpose.

Once in his pride of heart he swore that he would measure the height of heaven. So he caused to be made a machine in the shape of an enormous circle, by means of which he could ascend to the sky. He had already risen above the clouds, when suddenly there appeared to him Saint Peter, who cried:

'Stay, O Solomon! this is the boundary. If thou passest on, thou canst never return. Descend then, but beware, for beneath thee thou wilt see a blue field and a black surface. Descend on the latter, and not on the former; for the black is the earth, while the blue is the sea.'

Then the king said to himself, 'If I may not measure the height of heaven, at least I can measure the depth of ocean.' So he caused a house of glass to be made, in which he seated himself, and commanded his servants to affix a measuring chain to it, by means of which he could descend and the depth of the descent would be measured. They did as they were bidden, and the house descended into lower and lower depths without reaching the bottom. Suddenly there appeared a lobster, so large that two men could have ridden on its back. It cried to him:

'Solomon! Solomon! Thou canst not measure the depth of ocean. For twenty years have I sought it, but have not found it; and it is not given to thee to discover it. Return swiftly, or some young lobster may cut thy chain with his pincers!'[11]

In other tales Solomon learns that he is utterly powerless to alter the decrees of fate, however much he may desire to do so.

He had a daughter of peerless beauty, concerning whom he had read in the stars that a very poor man of the Children of Israel was destined to be her husband. In order to prevent this he caused a high tower to be erected out in the sea, in which he placed her. Seventy eunuchs were

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appointed to guard her, and an enormous quantity of provisions was prepared. And here she remained in apparent security. But the poor lad who was destined to be her husband was journeying one cold night, and knew not where to take shelter. At length he came upon the torn carcass of an ox lying in the field, into which he crept to find warmth and shelter. Thereupon there came an enormous bird, which seized in its talons the dead ox, together with the youth inside, and bore it to the roof of the tower in which the princess was imprisoned, and there devoured it. As the princess walked upon the summit of the tower in the morning she beheld the young man, and inquired of him how he had come thither. He told her what had happened, and added that he was from the town of Akko. Then she conducted him to a room, and he bathed and anointed himself, and put on the splendid robes that he found there, so that when he returned to her presence he appeared to her as a young man of marvellous beauty. Also he proved himself a skilful scribe. The princess burned with love for him, and besought him to take her to wife. And when he was willing to do this, he opened a vein in his body, and with the blood wrote the marriage-contract, which he took God and two angels to witness. So she became his wife. But in course of time the eunuchs perceived her altered condition, and they acquainted her father. When the king came, and learnt that, in spite of his care, she was married to one who was not only of surpassing beauty, but also extremely learned in the Jewish law, he knew at once that this was he of whom he had read in the stars. He was overjoyed thereat, and thanked God for giving him so noble a son-in-law.[12]

There were once two members of Solomon's court, the scribes Elihoreph and Ahiah (1 Kings iv. 3), in whom he put great trust, for they were his secretaries. One day when he was with them he saw, by his power of supernatural vision, the Angel of Death standing by their side, looking angrily upon them, and grinding his teeth as if in impotent anger. It was but a light thing for Solomon to

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utter a magical spell, by virtue of which they were both carried out of their seats high up into the air, where he believed they would be out of the way of danger. The angel immediately disappeared, following after them, and took both their souls away. When he had accomplished this he returned to Solomon, caused himself to become visible again, and began to laugh grimly. The king said, 'How is this? A few moments ago thou wert angry, and now thou art full of laughter.' The angel replied, 'Even so, and this is the reason for my changed aspect. God had commanded me to take away the souls of these two men while they were in the air, and as I asked myself who would cause them to go to that place where I was commissioned to deprive them of life, the thought came into thy mind, and so I fulfilled my mission.' Thus Solomon perceived that no man can act contrary to the decrees of God.[13]

His knowledge of magical spells stood him in good stead on one occasion. The following story comes from Abyssinia, in which country blacksmiths have always been held to be sorcerers, and possessed of the power of doing all manner of evil to men. Unfortunately, it is fragmentary, and has been preserved, not as a separate piece, but as part of a magical prayer. It appears that Solomon was once seized by demon blacksmiths, who plunged him in a trance for three days. Then during the night they conducted him into the presence of their hidden king, to whom he said, 'Thou hast filled me with alarm and terror.' The latter asked, 'What hast thou in thine heart?' Solomon answered, 'The praise of the Lord; He will save me.' Here the king seems to have threatened him, on which Solomon said, 'Thou canst not do what thou desirest to do!' The king thereupon ordered his blacksmiths to lead him away. They brought a maker of vessels, who was about to kill Solomon, but the latter recited three times the magical word, *Lofaham*. No sooner had he uttered this potent spell than the throat and belly of the demon melted as if they were water; all those with him were dispersed as if they were drops of

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rain or grains of dust; and their king alone remained. Solomon was angry with him, struck him in the face, and commanded him to tell him what evil things he had done. In a very corrupt and fragmentary passage he does so, first beseeching Solomon not to show anger towards him. His subjects the demons would take away a man's heart, in consequence of which he would die before six months had elapsed; they caused queens to bear children, in appearance human, but in truth demonic; they made themselves visible to men under many animal forms. Solomon was greatly troubled at what he had heard related; he repeated thrice the magical words, *Lafehom*, *Solomon*, *Iyouel*, *Iyosenaoui*. The tale stops short here, and is followed by the remainder of the prayer, which is to be used by the person who desires to ward off the evil influence of blacksmiths.[14]

Solomon's abundance of wisdom and knowledge led him to compose books on various subjects. In 1 Kings iv. 32, 33, allusion is made to his proverbs and songs, as well as to his utterances on botany and natural history. With respect to this last Josephus says, 'He was not unacquainted with any of their natures [i. e. of the birds, beasts, and fishes], nor omitted inquiries about them, but described them all like a philosopher, and demonstrated his exquisite knowledge of their several properties.' Nothing need here be said of those books attributed to him which are found in the canonical Scriptures and Apocrypha, nor to his Psalms or his Odes, a complete copy of which last has recently been discovered and translated. But tradition ascribes many other books to him. He is said to have written a work on the medicinal value of plants, stating how each should be employed, and giving the remedy for each malady. This was engraved on the doors of the Temple, but Hezekiah caused it to be erased, since (he said) the sick and infirm no longer invoked the help of God, but relied entirely on the medicines which Solomon had collected for them. Some think that the medical writers of later times, such as Hippocrates and Galen, drew largely for their information on this and similar works of King Solomon. In *Masnavi* it is said that

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'physicians and herbalists have derived their knowledge of the virtues of plants from the instructions originally given by King Solomon when he classified the plants that grew in the court of the Temple' (see p. 184).

He also composed a work on precious stones, explaining how each gained its distinctive colour, in what way it was made, and what purpose it served. He indicated in this which stone would preserve the chastity of its wearer, which would allay fever, which would drive away evil spirits, and so on. He also wrote on minerals, stating to what use each might be put. He is also credited with having written a commentary on the law of Moses, in which he explained what was said therein with respect to stones, plants, birds, and beasts.[15]

But, as was only to be expected of one who possessed that knowledge which enabled him to subjugate demons and spirits, Solomon was also credited with having written many books on magic: in some of these he stated by what rites one could summon them from the unseen world, in what forms they would appear, and by what conjurations they might be overpowered and reduced to servitude. Josephus says that 'God enabled Solomon to learn that skill which expels demons, which is a science useful and sanative to men. He composed incantations also by which distempers are alleviated. And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms, by which demons are driven away, so that they never return.' He says that he himself saw a Jew named Eleazar casting out evil spirits in the presence of Vespasian and his soldiers. The mode of procedure was as follows: 'Eleazar put a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down, immediately he abjured him to return into him no more, still making mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he composed. And when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water, and commanded the demon as he went out of the man to

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overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man. And when this was done, the skill and wisdom of Solomon was shown very manifestly.' One magical book was entitled *The Ring of Solomon*, and explained the means by which spirits might be imprisoned in a ring. Another writer states that a certain Aaron Isaac, Latin interpreter to the Emperor Manuel Comnenos, was greatly addicted to the practice of magic, and possessed one of these books of Solomon's. Whenever he read in it he would immediately be surrounded by legions of demons, who would demand why they were summoned; and, on receiving his commands, would execute them immediately.

The best known of all these works, however, is the book of ceremonial magic, known as *The Key of Solomon*. In the introduction to it Solomon orders Rehoboam to treasure up the wisdom of his words, seeing he has received them from the Lord. Owing to the wisdom that was in him he says, 'I saw that all the writings and wisdom of this present age were vain and futile, and that no man was perfect. And I composed a certain work, wherein I rehearsed the secret of secrets, in which I have preserved them hidden, and I have also therein concealed all secrets whatsoever of magical arts of any masters; any secrets or experiments, namely, of those sciences which are in any way worthy of being accomplished. Also I have written them in this Key, that as a key openeth a treasure-house, so this Key alone may open the knowledge and understanding of magical arts and sciences.' This Key Solomon ordered Rehoboam to enclose in an ivory casket, which was to be placed in his tomb. In after days certain Babylonian philosophers determined to renew the tomb in Solomon's honour; on opening it the casket was discovered, and the Key safe within it.[16]

One tradition, however, puts Solomon's connexion with magical books on an altogether different footing. So far from being the author of such it is said that he actually collected all the books on magical arts which were scattered through his kingdom, and locked them up in a box, which he placed under his throne to prevent their being used. After his death the Jinns, in order to make people believe

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that Solomon had been a sorcerer, declared that these books had been used by him. But this was a malicious falsehood, and was put forth by them in revenge for his having enslaved them.[17]

It is related that when Solomon was old he resolved to burn all the books he had written. He said to himself, 'The great number of my books is the cause that many people are lost, for they lose their faith in God, and cease to do good works, because they say, "Why did he, with so much wisdom, turn away from the Lord, if it is good to worship Him?"' And thereupon he ordered his confidants to burn all the books that were written by him, which contained about eight thousand proverbs and hymns. And they were much grieved, and went out of his presence; and having consulted with one another, they did not burn them, but returned and said to him that they had fulfilled his command.

And he said, 'What have ye seen?'

They replied, 'Nothing!'

Then he fell into a passion of anger, and in his wrath once more commanded them to burn them. And they went out, and did so: and then returning told him that all the world was filled with light and sweet odour, which, being concentrated, went up in the shape of a dove into heaven.

But one of the princes, favoured by God, hid in his bosom the book which the Church preserves in three divisions, namely, the Book of Proverbs, the Book of Compunction, which is called Ecclesiastes, and the Book of Hymns, which is called the Song of Songs. For some men doubt if the Book of 'Love Righteousness' (Wisdom) be his or not.[18]

Reference-Notes

1. Trans. in Cassel, *Commentary on Esther*, p. 269.
2. *Arabian Nights* (Story of Seyf-el-Muluk and Bedi-el-Jemal).
3. *Revue des Études juives*, xi. 224. See ibid., p. 227, and Wünsche, *Midrasch Ruth Rabba*, p. 73.
4. *Revue des traditions populaires*, ii. 520.
5. Schischmanoff, *Légendes religieuses bulgares*, p. 78.

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6. Wünsche, *Midrasch Ruth Rabba*, p. 71. On ibid., p. 70, a different tale is connected with the same text.

7. *Archiv für celtische Lexicographie*, iii, p. 321.

8. Josephus, *Antiq. Jud.*, viii. 5. 3; *contra Apion.*, i. 17, 18; Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, part 2, p. 445.

9. Kemble, *Anglo-Saxon Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn*, p. 25. Some of the matter in Kemble is translated in Migne, ii, cols. 872–83.

10. Hyde, *Legends of Saints and Sinners in Ireland*, p. 66. The underlying motive is found in a Jewish tale in Hershon, *Genesis with a Talmudical Commentary*, p. 158.

11. *Revue des traditions populaires*, ii. 513.

12. Grünbaum, *Neue Beit. z. sem. Sagenk.*, p. 233.

13. Schwab, *Le Talmud de Jérusalem*, ii, p. 320.

14. Basset, *Apocryphes éthiopiens*, part vii, p. 27.

15. Migne, ii, cols. 841, 845, 846; Josephus, *Antiq. Jud.*, viii. 2. 5; Whinfield, *Masnavi*, p. 189; Fabricius, *Cod. Apocr. Vet. Test.*, ii. 1044.

16. Josephus, *Antiq. Jud.*, viii. 2. 5; *Jewish Encycl.*, s. v. 'Solomon' (where is given a long list of books attributed to him); Migne, ii, cols. 842–5. The *Key of Solomon* has been translated into English by S. L. M. Mathers (1909); a facsimile, edited by Professor Hermann Gollancz, has been issued by the Clarendon Press.

17. *Jewish Encycl.*, s. v. 'Solomon in Arabic Literature.'

18. Issaverdens, *Uncanonical writings of the O. T. found in the Armenian MSS. of the Library of St. Lazarus, Venice*, p. 146.

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III

SOLOMON'S POWER AND MAGNIFICENCE

THERE are many traditions of the power, the magnificence, and the wealth of King Solomon, which were greater than that of all the kings who were about him. It is told that the Lord God gave him rule not only over men, but over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the creeping things of the earth, and over all devils, demons, and spirits. He understood the language of birds, and all creatures upon earth, of all fishes in seas, rivers, and inland lakes, of trees and winds, of Jinns and evil spirits. When the kings of the North and the South, the East and the West, heard of his fame, they were afraid and came trembling, and presented to him much gold and silver, pearls and precious stones. Also the king sent expeditions and gathered gold and jewels from Tarshish and Ophir. And he was numbered among the four men who, each in his own day, were masters of the whole world; two of them were True Believers, Solomon and Alexander, and two were infidels, Nimrod and Sheddad the son of Ad. Also King Solomon was a prophet before the Lord, but because he was also ruler and governor of the world, he was the last of the prophets to enter Paradise by a space of forty years. And the beginning of his power and magnificence was on this wise.[1]

When Solomon had performed the last rites at the burial of David his father, he rested upon his return in a valley between Hebron and Jerusalem. And he fell into a trance, and when he came to himself he saw eight angels standing before him, whose wings were of different colours, and they bowed themselves three times to the earth before the king. He asked of them who they were, and they said:

'We are the Angels of the Eight Winds, and we are sent to thee by God our Creator that we may serve thee, and

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that thou shouldst rule over us and over the winds which are obedient to us. At thy will they shall rage, and at thy will they shall be calm, and they shall always blow from the part towards which thou shalt turn thy back. At thy command they will lift thee from the earth and set thee upon the highest mountain.'

And the chief of the angels gave Solomon a precious stone, on which were inscribed the words 'God is power and greatness', and said: 'When thou hast a command to give us raise this stone towards heaven, and we will come to thee.'

Then the angels vanished, and there appeared immediately four others, who differed in form one from another. The first had the shape of a whale, the second of an eagle, the third of a lion, the fourth of a serpent. They did obeisance before the king, and said: 'We are the rulers of all the living creatures that are found on the earth and in the sea and in the air, and we come before thee now according to the command of the Lord. Do with us as thou wilt; for all the pleasant things that the Creator gave us shall be thine, and against thine enemies we will contend to destroy them.'

And the Angel of the Birds gave a precious stone to the king, and it was graven with the words: 'Let every living thing praise the Lord.' And he said: 'By the virtue of this stone, which thou shalt raise above thy head, thou canst command us and we will come to thee.' Then the king commanded the angels to bring before him a pair of every kind of living creature that was upon the earth or in the sea or in the air. The angels vanished, and suddenly there appeared before Solomon all manner of living things, from the elephant to the smallest worm. And the king talked with them and learnt their manner of life, and if aught vexed them he set it right. But he loved the birds more than all others, because their notes were pleasant to his ear.

And when these had gone away there came another angel before the king, the upper portion of whose body was of earth and the lower of water. He made obeisance and said: 'God hath created me that I may make known thy desire

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upon the earth and in the sea. I am here to do thy will. At thy word the mountains shall disappear; at thy word they shall arise in the midst of the plains. Rivers and lakes shall dry up or the waters shall cover the earth as a sea according to thy will.' Before he disappeared he gave Solomon a third stone on which was inscribed: 'Heaven and earth are the servants of God.'

Lastly another angel brought him a fourth precious stone, graven with the words: 'There is no god but God and Mohammed is His Prophet.' The angel said to him, 'By the virtue of this stone there is given to thee dominion over the world of spirits, which is greater than that of man, and fills almost the whole space between heaven and earth. Part of this world of spirits holds the Faith and invokes the True God. But others are unbelievers, worshipping, some fire, some the sun, some various stars, some water. The righteous spirits encompass pious men, preserving them from danger and sin; but the unrighteous seek to bring harm upon mankind, and this they can do the more easily because they are able to render themselves invisible or to take on what form they please.'

Then the king caused these four stones to be set in a ring, which he wore always; the tale of the fate that befell him when he laid it aside shall be told presently. But some writers give a different account of the composition and appearance of the ring. Some say that it was made partly of brass and partly of iron. With the brass the king sealed his commands to the good Jinns, and with the iron (for that was a metal which they hated and feared) his commands to the evil Jinns. It is said that the ring was brought from heaven by the Archangel Michael and given to Solomon; on the stone that formed the seal some say a Pentalpha * was engraved; but others a six-pointed star. There is also a tradition that its power was due to the imprisonment of a mandrake within it.[2]

There is yet another tale of the coming of the ring. God called Gabriel and said to him: 'Go into Paradise, and take the ring of the Khalifs, and bear it to My servant

* Five capital A's interlaced.

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Solomon.' Gabriel did as he was bidden and descended to earth with it. The ring sparkled like a star and gleamed like the lightning, so that its rays blinded the eyes, and there came from it a perfume like musk. It was graven on each of the four sides with texts praising the greatness of God. It had four stones, which were for the four divisions of living things. The first was the sovereignty of the rebellious Jinns; the second for creatures of the water, and frogs, and beasts of prey in deserts and prairies; the third of the kings of all the earth to the east and to the west; the fourth for trees and plants and dwellers in mountains and water. In the beginning God had given this ring to Adam when he was in Paradise and said to him: 'This is the ring of power, which I will give thee. As long as thou forgettest not My commandment, it shall be thine; but if thou forgettest it, I will take it from thee and give it to another, and he shall be thy successor.' And while Adam walked in Paradise the ring was his, but when he sinned it flew from his finger and hid under one of the pillars of the throne of God, and said to Him: 'Thou hast created me to obey, but behold, this Adam hath broken Thy covenant with him, and I am in a strait.' And God said: 'Trouble not thyself, for I will send to thee a prudent man who shall walk uprightly in My statutes.'

And when God had chosen Solomon He put power into the ring and sent Gabriel with it to the king. Now the king was in his palace among the chiefs of the tribes, the priests, the judges, and the doctors. The archangel said to him: 'O son of King David, receive this gift from God.' Then the king set it upon his finger and ascended his throne and caused all the people to come before him. He lifted up his hand, and the ring gleamed like the lightning and they could not look at it. The king said: 'Behold, in this ring is all my strength and my majesty, for the Lord hath given it to me and hath separated me from all the rest of mankind, giving me rule over the rebellious Jinns.' Thereon he kneeled down, and the whole assembly with him, from early morning until late evening giving thanks and praise to Almighty God. At last the king raised his head and

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sought to gaze at the ring, and the whole company with him, but they could not look at it because of its brightness. Then Solomon said: 'Say ye with me, "There is no god but God, and Mohammed is the Prophet of God".' And when they had repeated this they were able to look upon the ring.[3]

The king set himself to subdue the kingdom of the Jinns, for in all the empire that had been given him they were the only rebels. Gabriel therefore arose with his right wing stretched towards the East and his left wing towards the West, and cried: 'Ye Jinns and Satans, the Lord hath commanded that ye should assemble yourselves before Solomon the king.' The Jinns and Satans came out of caves and deserts, from mountains, hills, valleys, and dark places, and cried: 'At thy service, at thy service, thou herald of the Lord of Might', until they were all assembled before Solomon. There were four hundred and twenty divisions of them, each division having a different appearance. They said one to another: 'It was an error when we said of Adam, "We are better than he"' (*Koran*, Sura vii). When they had come before Solomon he began to consider their appearance and their clothing. They were of all colours, yellow, red, black, white, piebald; and of all shapes, appearing as snakes, mules, asses, cows, dogs, or wolves. Many of them had snouts, tails, or claws. Others had faces upon their shoulders, and out of their mouths came sparks of fire. Others had blue eyes, green faces, and black bodies. Many had the heads of lions on the bodies of elephants; others had two heads, one on their shoulders, one at their feet.

When Solomon had considered them he fell on his face before God, thanking and praising Him for all the power that He had given him, and saying: 'My God, I knew not that Thou hadst created such beings. Endue me now, I pray Thee, with strength and majesty, that I may look upon them and faint not.' Then Gabriel said: 'Power is bestowed upon thee; stand upon thy feet.' The king arose, on his head the circlet of the Khalifs, on his finger the ring; and when the Jinns saw him they fell to the ground before

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him. They raised their heads, and cried: 'O son of King David, we are all subject to thee and must obey thee.' The king inquired of them concerning their generation and children, their food and drink, their government and religion, and said, 'How is it that ye appear in diverse forms, and are all descended from one father, even Gān?' They answered, 'O Prophet of God, we have not hitherto seen aught so marvellous as thy might and thy ring! The multiplicity of our appearances is according to the number of our rebellions against God, and because Iblis mingles with us and leads us astray to live with him and his children.'

Solomon beheld a Satan, half-dog and half-cat, with a long snout, and said: 'Who art thou?' He answered: 'I am Mahr bin Hafāf, whom Noah brought with him into the ark.' The king said: 'With what dost thou concern thyself?' He answered: 'I am he who presses the juice from the grape, and gives it to men to drink. I and my children dwell in the valleys of India, and we seduce men to drunkenness, to playing on lutes and harps, to all manner of tricks, to lying, to false witness, yea, to murder and to all sins against God.' Then the king commanded him to be bound with chains.

Then Solomon looked on one whose appearance was more frightful than that of the others, for he had a form as it were of smoke, and burning fire came out of his mouth. Fresh blood dripped from his hair on to his body and by his side hung a sword and knife. The king asked him: 'Who art thou?' He answered, 'I am Halhāl, the sword-bearer of Iblis.' The king asked him: 'What is thy work?' He answered: 'Not a drop of man's blood is shed on earth except through me, and this chain which thou seest upon my neck is of the blood of Abel.' The king commanded him to be bound, but he said: 'Fetter me not, O Prophet of God! I will assemble for thee all the giants upon earth, and will make thee a sure promise that I will do no hurt as long as thou livest.' Then the king set his seal upon his neck and let him go free; and he became obedient to Solomon.

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Then Murra, the son of El-Hārit, came before the king, in the likeness of an ape, with long claws like sickles, and he carried a harp. The king said: 'Who art thou?' And when he told him, he asked him again: 'What is thy handiwork?' He said: 'I was the first to make a harp and to play on it, and this is the only instrument by which men receive sensual pleasure.' The king commanded him to be bound, and thus he fettered many of them.

On the shoulders of many others he set his seal, and he separated them into troops and caused them to enter their dwellings, but the contumacious he fettered fast in iron. And there were certain disobedient ones among the Satans who strove to rebel, but angels who bore clubs went between them and Solomon and overthrew them before the face of the king. All the land was black with the Jinns, as with swarms of ants or locusts. None were absent except only Sakhar, the Mārid, the mighty Jinn, who dwelt far off on an island. And Iblis found himself alone, with none to help him, and he also came before Solomon, for he could stand safely before the king since he had not been sealed on the shoulder. Then he said: 'I have done no homage to thee nor to thy father Adam, for I evaded falling down before him and would not yield.* Neither did I submit myself to thee at the sight of the ring. Therefore is the time of my freedom to last till the Day of Resurrection.' So he spoke, and departed from Solomon.[4]

The king caused the Jinns to work for him; they built cities and fortresses, and they toiled at the building-up of the Temple. But the female Jinns he set to other work, cooking, washing, spinning, weaving, and carrying water. Some of the Jinns were True Believers, and others the king converted to the Faith. But others remained heretics and rebels, and on these the king inflicted judgement. If he were angry he would cause the rebellious Jinn to be bound and set in the middle of a large stone, and sawn asunder together with the stone; and the fragments to be thrown into a large vessel of copper and iron, brayed to powder with a pestle, and then thrown into the ocean. It is written

* Cf. *Koran*, Sura vii.

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that Solomon *built Tadmor in the wilderness* (2 Chron. viii. 4), and this he did by the aid of the Jinns. If any of these rebelled, the king had him placed between two blocks of marble and built into the foundations of the city. When the imprisoned Jinns shake themselves in order to be free from their confinement the earth trembles, and this is the cause of the earthquakes in the region of Tadmor.

But more often Solomon commanded that a rebellious Jinn should be imprisoned in a bottle of brass, the mouth of which was afterwards closed with a stopper of lead, marked with the king's seal, the virtue of which prevented the captive from escaping, and the bottle was then cast into the sea. In a well-known story one of these Jinns is released by a fisherman, and tells him: 'I am one of the heretical Jinns; I rebelled against Solomon, I and Sakhar the Jinn. He sent to me his Vizier, Asaph the son of Berachiah, who came upon me forcibly and took me in bonds and set me before the king. And when Solomon saw me he offered up a prayer for protection against me, and exhorted me to embrace the Faith and submit myself to him, but I refused. Then he confined me in this bottle and closed it with a leaden stopper, stamped with the Most Great Name, and he commanded the Jinn to bear me away and cast me into the midst of the sea. And this they did.'

It is said that in one part of the Mediterranean the fishermen would often bring up such bottles in their nets, long after the death of Solomon. For amusement they would break the seals and release the prisoners, who would emerge in the form of smoke, crying, 'Repentance! repentance! O Prophet of God!' for they did not know that Solomon was dead. The King of Syria heard of this, and sent an Emir in quest of such bottles, who after many strange adventures obtained twelve bottles from the King of the Blacks. When these were opened in the king's presence the Jinns emerged, crying out as we have said.[5]

But according to a curious, though somewhat later, story, Solomon obtained the mastery over the demons by means of the Philosopher's Stone. When he had made this, he determined to constrain all evil beings and keep them from

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doing harm to man. And this was the manner of it. He had an enormous copper vat constructed, and a lid which fitted it exactly. He had a hole excavated in the earth, and the vat placed in the hole. Then by virtue of the stone he summoned together the spirits, great and small. First he brought together their four emperors from the four corners of the earth; after them, their kings, their dukes, their barons, and their captains.* All these he caused to enter into the vat, which they unwillingly did, and immediately its lid was set upon it, and sealed, and covered with earth. Then indeed the Golden Age returned. All nature was gay and bountiful; men were joyous and happy, and lived together in peace. The trees bore fruit without being tended, and all wild animals—wolves, lions, bears, tigers—were gentle as lambs. But this did not continue. For many years after, when the imprisonment of the Jinns had been forgotten, a certain king desired to build a city, and the site he chose was the place where the vat lay buried. It may be that some small devil, concealed behind a fragment of earth, had escaped Solomon's eye, and that it was he who suggested the building of the city. For presently those who were digging the foundations came upon the vat, which they supposed must contain great treasure. Alas for the avarice of men! The king, knowing that his predecessors had much wealth and thinking that he had found the store, commanded the vat to be opened. But when the lid was at last raised, all the company of the devils rushed out with a horrid noise, and in a moment spread through the whole world, furious at their imprisonment and raging with malice. Especially since then have they directed their hatred against the alchemists, destroying their furnaces and breaking their crucibles, since it was through their discoveries that they had been captives for so long.[6]

It is said that when the Queen of Sheba had seen, amongst other wonders, *the meat of his tables, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, there was no more spirit in her* (1 Kings x. 5). Now the tables of Solomon

* For a list of the infernal hierarchy, *see* John Ashton, *The Devil in Britain and America*, (London, 1896), p. 26, quoting from Reginald Scott.

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the king covered the space of a square mile. For the food that was prepared daily the cooks used thirty thousand oxen, as many sheep, and innumerable fish and game-birds of every kind. The daily allowance of wine for the king's household was four hundred basins. All this was obtained by virtue of the ring. Certain demons were sent to scour the depths of the sea, in order to furnish his table with every species of fish; but it is said that the fowl of the air, together with the cattle and wild animals, came daily of their own will to the king's slaughter-houses. The vessels of the kitchens had to be of a proportionate size, and these were made by the Jinns, so huge and high that they could not be moved, and when the food was cooked the king's servants set heavy steps against the vessels and went up and bore it away. Some say that the Jinns cut an enormous fragment out of a mountain, which they fashioned into the shape of a cauldron, and as this could not be moved on account of its weight hearths were built underneath it.

At the daily feast this was *the sitting of his servants.* The demons and spirits were placed at tables of iron; the poor at tables of wood; the chiefs of the people and of the army at tables of silver; and the doctors of the law and persons renowned for piety at tables of gold. For their dignity's sake and for the love that he bore to men of learning and holiness, the king waited on these in person.[7]

As the king looked and saw how many people and Jinns rose from his tables with their hunger satisfied, and as he considered how much food was brought together by his supernatural power, the sin of presumption laid hold on him, and in his folly he prayed the Creator to permit him to feast all living things upon earth. But God said: 'Thou hast asked an impossible thing; learn thy feebleness by satisfying to-morrow the creatures of the sea. When they are filled thou mayest feed the creatures of the earth.' The king commanded the Jinns to load a hundred thousand camels and as many mules with sacks of corn and to lead them to the sea-shore. He himself went thither and cried: 'Come, ye dwellers in the ocean, in order that I may appease your hunger.' Thereupon a countless multitude

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of fish of every kind appeared upon the surface, to which Solomon threw corn till they were all satisfied and passed away again into the waters.

Then there appeared a whale with a head as large as a mountain. The Jinns poured sack after sack of corn into its gullet, till there was not a single grain left, but still it bellowed, 'Feed me, O Solomon, for never have I felt such hunger as I suffer this day.' The king asked him if there were more like him in the sea. He answered: 'There are seventy thousand such as I, and the smallest among them is so great that if thou wert in its belly thou wouldst be comparable only to a single grain of sand in the desert.'

Then Solomon the king fell upon his face, and wept and cried to God to pardon him for his presumption and his folly. And the Lord answered him, saying: 'Consider now one of My creatures over whom no man hath authority, and say if My kingdom is not greater than thine.' Thereupon the surface of the water began to heave and foam as if the eight winds were blowing on it, and there appeared in the midst of it the great Leviathan, so huge a monster that it could have swallowed seventy thousand of those great whales, the hunger of a single one of which Solomon was unable to satisfy. And it spoke with a voice as of many thunders, saying: 'Blessed be God, whose power alone preserves me from perishing with hunger.'

But Mirkhond gives the story somewhat differently. For he says that when the king had prepared the food for the feast that was to be given to all living things, God sent a creature out of the sea who came before Solomon and said to him: 'This day thou art giving a feast to all living creatures, and this day therefore my food must come from thee; command that my portion be given me.' The king said: 'Go to the kitchens and eat what thou wilt.' The beast did so, but it devoured all that had been prepared, including twenty-two thousand oxen and other food in proportion, and it returned to Solomon and said: 'Feed me, O Solomon.' When the king saw that all that had been prepared by his servants through many days had been consumed by one creature, he was astonished and afraid. The

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monster stood before him and said: 'O Solomon, I have received from thee but one-third of my daily food; from whom then shall I receive the remaining two portions?' The king said: 'All this that thou hast swallowed in a moment has been collected during many days for the satisfying of all living creatures, and behold upon thy coming it has been consumed.' The monster answered: 'Am I to go hungry this one day on which I have been sent to be thy guest? If thou canst not satisfy one creature, why hast thou desired to feed Jinns, men, animals, birds, and reptiles?' But the king was warned by these words, and said: 'I take refuge with the Lord', and he repented, and the Lord forgave him his folly.[8]

Many buildings were erected by the king. He commanded skilled architects to lay out the foundations of Jerusalem with marble stones, and divided it by twelve ramparts; between these the twelve tribes were to dwell. It is said that when, by order of the king, the Satans had built citadels about the Holy City, they built others, very strong fortresses, in the country of Yaman, and fashioned in them figures of angels, prophets, saints, heroes, birds, and wild animals, which they constructed of gold, silver, brass, agate, and crystal.

It is said also that it was Solomon through whom the Mount of Calvary was raised, which came about thus. The king was hunting in the fields, having with him a servant to carry his cloak, who was not able to keep up with his lord. There came a sudden storm, and the servant, with a greyhound and a falcon, took refuge in a cave hard by, where he saw with astonishment that the sides and roof of the cave were made of bone. After the storm the king met him, and when he had heard of this marvel he came the next day to see it. And when he had had the earth and the weeds cleared away from the bone he knew it for the skull of Adam. Then the king called together all the children of Israel, from the least to the greatest, and said to them: 'As ye see me do, so do ye.' And he took a stone in his hand and bowed himself before the skull, and said: 'I do reverence to thee, as the First-Created of God.'

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SOLOMON AND THE GREAT WHALE.

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Afterwards he cast the stone at it, saying, 'I strike thee, as an offender against God.' All the people therefore did so, and the skull was covered with stones, and this was the making of Golgotha, the Place of a Skull.[9]

It was commanded in the Law that the King of Israel *shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses* (Deut. xvii. 16). But Solomon had horses *brought out of Egypt; and the king's merchants received them in droves, each drove at a price* (1 Kings x. 28, R.V.). Nevertheless, the king did not break the Law, for he did not *send the people* to Egypt, but caused others to bring the horses to him from thence, for he treasured them for their beauty. It is said that one day, at the hour of evening prayer, when they were being displayed before him, he said: 'Truly I have loved the love of earthly goods more than the remembrance of my Lord. Bring them back to me.' And he began to cut off their heads and their legs, and offered them to God, because he had allowed the hour of prayer to pass by without regard. But Moussa ben Abi Ismael ben Hassan says that the king was exercising his horses in the plain when the hour of prayer arrived, and he dismounted and would not suffer the grooms to spend the time set apart for prayer in leading them to the stables, but left them as it were masterless and devoted to the service of God. To reward him for his faith and obedience God sent him a wind, gentle, agreeable, and strong, which carried him from that time everywhere he wished to go, so that he had no further need for a horse. It is of this that the Koran says: 'We subjected the wind to him; it ran softly at his bidding, whithersoever he directed it. Unto Solomon did we subject the wind, which travelled in the morning a month's journey and a month's journey in the evening' (Suras, xxi, xxxiv). Mirkhond quotes an authority as saying that it is impossible that the king would have dealt so barbarously with the horses, and as declaring the passage to mean only that he stroked with his hands their necks and their legs, and then presented them to men of valour who were bound for religious wars. Also God commanded and the sun rose again in the west, and

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Solomon recited the evening prayers at the appointed time.[10]

The king had had built a vast circus or hippodrome, in which horse-races were held each month under the successive superintendence of each of the twelve commissaries who had to provide for the king's household (cf. 1 Kings iv. 7). In the thirteenth month of an embolismic year there were no horse-races, but races were run by ten thousand young men of the tribe of Gad (or Naphtali), the calves of whose legs were removed, rendering the runners so swift that no horse could compete with them. The hippodrome was three parasangs long and three parasangs wide, and in the middle of it were two posts surmounted by cages in which all kinds of beasts and birds were confined. Out of the jaws of four golden lions, bound to pillars in pairs, spices and perfumes flowed for the people. Around the posts the horses had to run eight times.

There were four companies of charioteers, each containing four thousand men divided into smaller companies. These were arranged on platforms, arranged one above the other. Opposite each company were two doors of olive-wood, which were decorated with gold and all manner of carved figures, and set with many kinds of precious stones. The spectators also were divided into four companies, namely, the king with his household, the scholars, the priests, and the Levites, who were clothed in blue; the people of Jerusalem, who were clothed in white; the people who dwelt outside Jerusalem, who were clothed in red; the Gentiles from distant countries who had brought presents to Solomon, and who were clothed in green.[11]

Josephus says concerning the horses and riders of King Solomon: 'These horses were so much exercised, in order to their making a fine appearance and running swiftly, that no others could upon comparison appear either finer or swifter; but they were at once the most beautiful of all others, and their swiftness was incomparable also. Their riders were a further ornament to them, being in the first place young men in the most delightful flower of their age, and being eminent for their largeness, and far taller than

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other men. They had long hair hanging down, and were clothed in garments of Tyrian purple. They had dust of gold every day sprinkled on their hair, so that their heads glistened with the reflection of the sunbeams from the gold. The king himself rode upon a chariot in the midst of these men, who were in armour, and had their bows fitted to them. He had on a white garment, and used to take his progress out of the city in the morning. He was very diligent to have all things done beautifully; so he did not neglect the care of the ways, but he laid a causeway of black stone along the roads that led to Jerusalem, both to render them easy to travellers and to manifest the grandeur of his government.' [12]

But of all precious things possessed by King Solomon the most famous was the golden throne that he had made for himself. It is said of this in the Scriptures: *The king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold. And there were six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, which were fastened to the throne, and stays on either side of the sitting-place, and two lions standing beside the stays: and twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps* (1 Kings x. 18; 2 Chron. ix. 17). To this Josephus adds that 'at the sitting-place of the throne hands came out and received the king; and when he sat backward he rested on half a bullock, that looked towards his back, but still all was fastened together with gold'.

The description of the throne in the second Targum on Esther far outdoes these, although some of its details are not quite clear. The throne was made for Solomon by Hiram, the artificer from Tyre. It was covered with gold from Ophir, set with marble, beryls, brilliants, emeralds, carbuncles, diamonds, pearls, and other precious stones. Twelve lions of gold stood upon it, and opposite them twelve eagles of gold, so that the right paw of each golden lion was towards the left wing of each golden eagle. Altogether there were seventy-two golden lions and as many golden eagles upon various parts of the throne. Towards the top, where the king's seat was, the throne was round. It had six steps of gold. Upon the first step lay a golden

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lion, and opposite to it a golden ox; upon the second step lay a golden bear, and opposite to it a golden lamb; upon the third step lay a golden panther, and opposite to it a golden owl; upon the fourth step lay a golden eagle, and opposite to it a golden peacock; upon the fifth step lay a golden cat, and opposite to it a golden hen; and upon the sixth step lay a golden hawk, and opposite to it a golden dove. Upon the throne there stood also a golden dove, holding in its claws a golden hawk; this signified that one day all nations would be delivered into the hands of the Messiah. Upon the top of the throne was placed a candlestick, having its proper lamps, snuffers, ash-pans, and the like. To one side of its shaft were attached seven pipes, on which were graven representations of the seven Patriarchs; on the other side of it were likewise seven pipes, on which were graven the seven pious men of the world. Upon the top of the candlestick stood a golden jar filled with the purest olive oil, which supplied the lamps of the Temple; and under it was a great golden vessel, containing the purest olive oil, which supplied the lamps of the candlestick, and upon it was portrayed the High Priest. From this vessel two branches proceeded, on which were portrayed Hophni and Phinehas; and out of these branches proceeded two pipes bearing representations of Nadab and Abihu. On the upper side of the throne were placed twenty-four vines of gold, giving a shade to the king.

When the king wished to ascend his throne and had set his foot on the first step, the golden ox raised him to the second, and so on up to the sixth. Then the eagles took him and seated him on the throne. As often as he ascended it and sat down, the crown was placed upon his head; the lions and eagles arose and cast a shade over him; a golden dove descended from one pillar, opened a cabinet, took out the Book of the Law, and placed it in his hands. Wherever he desired to go the throne moved with him upon wheels, and there was a serpent of silver round about the wheels. Wherever he went upon the throne rivers of spices flowed.

A similar account is given in another Jewish work, which

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in some respects agrees with this but varies in certain details. Its description of the steps to the throne and of their occupants is a little confused. It is stated that on the extremities of each step were two lions, and when the king set his foot on the first step to ascend the throne those on the right stretched out their paws, on which was engraved the sentence: 'Thou shalt not in judgement have respect unto persons.' Also those on the left stretched out their paws, on which was graven: 'Thou shalt take no bribes.' Before the king could pass on to the next step he had to read these commandments, and this happened on each step. All the steps were set with precious stones and pearls, red, white, and green. Trees and various kinds of palm grew on the side of each step, and upon their branches rested all kinds of eagles, peacocks, and other birds. On the highest step were two pillars of ivory, borne on the heads of the lions, and two golden vines, hollow and fragrant with every kind of perfume which was exhaled from them as soon as the king ascended the throne. Upon the steps approaching the throne (this must be an alternative account, as they have already been described) there were placed as many unclean animals as clean, all face to face; thus, on the first step the ox was placed opposite the lion. When the king set his foot on the first step he turned himself round, the lion stretched out his paw on the right, and the eagle his talon on the left. Upon these he leaned, and they raised him to the next step, and thus he was lifted up by the animals on each step. When he reached the top of the throne, the peacocks began to scream, all the other birds began to chirp and sing, and all the trees gave forth their perfumes. A serpent of gold encircled his waist, and having seated him on the throne crept down beneath his feet. The eagles, after wafting breezes of perfume with their wings, set the crown upon his head; and this done, all the creatures of the throne cried out with one accord: 'Long may the kingdom of the house of David be established.'

It is stated in the Targum on Esther that when the kings of the nations round about heard of the report of the existence of the throne they gathered themselves together

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and came to Solomon to see with their own eyes the truth of the tales they had heard. But they were dazzled by its glory, and fell to the ground before him, and cried out that there had been no such throne made for any king before him, nor could its like be fashioned among any nation.

On either side of the throne the elders sat to judge the people; and when any man came before them who designed in his heart to bear false witness, it was immediately known. For the wheels of the throne moved, the oxen lowed, the lions roared, the bears growled, the lambs bleated, the panthers yelled, the owls hooted, the cats mewed, the peacocks shrieked, the cocks crowed, the hawks screamed, and the birds chirped. Then those who came to bear false witness were afraid, and said to themselves: 'Let us speak the truth only, or the world will be destroyed because of us.'

Afterwards, the throne formed part of the plunder that Nebuchadnezzar took from Jerusalem. He desired to seat himself upon it, but he did not know that it could only be ascended in a particular manner, so that when he set his foot upon the first step and the golden lion stretched out its paw, it smote him upon the left foot and he was lame to the day of his death. And after him Alexander the Great took the throne and brought it to Egypt. Shishak, King of Egypt, saw its beauty and desired to seat himself upon it, but he too was wounded by the paw of the lion and was called 'The lame Pharaoh' until he died. Then Antiochus Epiphanes took it, and put it on board ship, where a leg of it was broken, nor could any man repair it, though all the artists and goldsmiths of the world were brought together. But after the fall of the kingdom of Antiochus, it came into the hands of Cyrus the Persian, who because he had rebuilt the Temple was granted to ascend the throne and seat himself thereon. Thereafter it is said by some to have been in the possession of King Ahasuerus; this was that *throne of his kingdom which was in Shushan the palace* (Esther i. 2), on which he sat when the Queen Vashti refused to come before him. But a certain Jew of the second century, who says that he saw the fragments of the throne in Rome, denies that King

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Ahasuerus used it, since none but a *Kosmokrator* * had the right to sit upon it.[13]

Jewish commentators have asked, concerning the words in 1 Chron. xxix. 23, *Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king*: 'Was it then granted to any man to sit on the throne of God?' The meaning of the sentence, they answer, is that as God's throne governs the entire universe, so Solomon bore rule over the whole world; and as the Holy One created six heavens and enthroned Himself in the seventh, so the throne of Solomon had six steps and he himself was seated on the seventh.[14]

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1. Cassel, pp. 275, 285; Quarterly Statement (Pal. Ex. Fund), Jan. 1909, p. 38.
2. Migne, ii, cols. 850-2. For the ring, see ibid.; *Testament of Solomon*; *Jewish Encycl.*, s. v. 'Solomon, Seal of'; Frazer, *Folklore in O. T.*, ii, p. 390. A description of the power of the ring and of the feats that could be performed by means of it is found—where one would least expect it—in an Esthonian story in W. F. Kirby, *The Hero of Esthonia*, vol. ii, pp. 248 ff.
3. Salzberger, *Die S.-Sage*, p. 120.
4. Ibid., pp. 102, 108.
5. Migne, ii, col. 853; Zotenberg, *Chronique de Tabari*, i, p. 435; Dähnhardt, *Natursagen*, i, p. 321; *Arabian Nights* (stories of the Fisherman, and the City of Brass). A list of cities built by Solomon is given in *Revue des traditions populaires*, ix, p. 190.
6. Des Périers, *Cymbalum Mundi*, p. 45.
7. Migne, ii, col. 853; Cassel, p. 269; Mirkhond, p. 78; Tabari, p. 449.
8. Migne, ii, cols. 853-4; Mirkhond, p. 80.
9. Mirkhond, pp. 76, 77; Jagic, *Slavische Beit. z. den bibl. Apokryphen*, i, p. 62 (*Denkschr. der Kaiserl. Akad. d. Wiss., Phil.-hist. Kl.*, 42).
10. *Koran*, Suras xxi, xxxiv, xxxviii; D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, iii, p. 336; Mirkhond, p. 101.
11. *Jewish Encycl.*, s. v. 'Solomon'.
12. *Antiq. Jud.*, viii. 7. 3-4.
13. Ibid., viii. 5. 2; Cassel, pp. 14, 268, 270-5; Gaster, *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, p. 251. See also Salzberger, *Salomos Tempelbau und Thron in der semitischen Sagenliteratur*, pp. 55 ff.
14. Salzberger, pp. 58, 59.

* A ruler of the world.

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IV

SOLOMON'S MAGIC CARPET

AMONGST the many wonders possessed by Solomon was a magic carpet which had been given him by God. It measured sixty miles each way, and was made of green silk interwoven throughout with pure gold, and everywhere richly ornamented with figured decorations. On this were carried the king's army, his personal attendants and servants, with iron stoves and stone pots of incredible size; while one part of it was kept for horses and other animals. When Solomon desired to be borne through the air on it, it was placed before the city gate; and the king seated himself upon it surrounded by his four princes, namely Asaph the son of Berechiah (prince of men), Ramirat (prince of demons), the lion (prince of beasts), and the eagle (prince of birds). High in the air above him the birds of every species flew so thickly that they served as a canopy to protect his head from the sun, of which not the slightest ray could penetrate the shelter of their wings. Then at his command the wind which God had sent him, which was named Rukhā, raised the carpet and carried it and all it contained to any part of the earth.

It is said that on a certain day, as he was transported on the carpet, beholding all created beings in subjection to him, and considering that no king that ever lived had been carried in such a manner, or with so much pomp, his heart swelled within him at his own power and glory, and he said, 'Who is there that hath been given such might as I?' Immediately the wind shook the carpet, so that there fell from it to the ground ten thousand men, who were dashed in pieces. In an outburst of rage Solomon smote the wind with a whip, crying, 'Restrain thyself, Rukhā!' But the wind retorted, 'Do thou first restrain thyself, Solomon,

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and then I will do likewise!' And at this rebuke Solomon bent his head in shame.[1]

Of his voyages on the carpet to different places, and of the strange sights he beheld, many tales are told.

On one occasion he and his retinue found themselves floating over a bleak, precipitous valley. Its craggy sides were formed by vast chains of mountains with peaks so sharp and steep that no human being had ever visited them, or even seen them, except Solomon alone. This was the Valley of Ants. For as he looked down the king beheld beneath him, on the floor of the valley, an immense swarm of ants. [According to one writer they differed from that tiny insect of whose diligent ways Solomon himself had prophesied. For they were as large as wolves, and had eyes of green.] The King of the Ants, who, for his part, had never beheld a mortal before, was filled with amazement at the sight of Solomon, and ordered his army to enter their hiding-places lest they should be injured by the descent of the carpet upon them. When Solomon knew this he caused the carpet to descend gently, and gave orders that no one should move from it until the ants had retired into their nests. He then called for the king, placed him on the palm of his hand, and conversed mildly with him, as follows.

Solomon said, 'Knowest thou that I am a prophet of God, and that I would not injure even an ant under my foot?'

'I know it,' replied the King of the Ants. 'But as it is incumbent upon superiors to admonish their inferiors, I did so. Also I feared lest thy followers should do us harm, and perceive it not.'

Solomon approved of this reply, and continued, 'Is my power and dominion greater than thine?'

'O Prophet of God,' the king answered, 'thy throne is borne by the wind, but *mine* is now the palm of the hand of the mighty king!'

Solomon said, 'Is my army more numerous than thine?'

The Ant replied, 'Give me a little time to show thee

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some of my army.' Thereupon he bade his army come forth into Solomon's presence. It is related that thereon seventy thousand legions issued forth from their nests, the numbers of which were known to none except their Creator.

In astonishment Solomon asked, 'Hast thou other armies beside these?'

'O Prophet,' answered the Ant, 'be it known unto thee, that if they were during seventy years to continue to appear every day in this manner, all of them could not present themselves before thee.'

Solomon then desired to depart, but the King of the Ants said, 'Delay a little, until I bring thee an offering in conformity with my circumstances.' And when Solomon had agreed, the Ant departed, and returned with one-half of the leg of a locust, which he presented to the king.[2]

The wind carried Solomon away from the Valley of Ants, and after travelling for a while he saw in the distance a lofty palace, all constructed of pure gold. Therefore he ordered the carpet to descend, and when it reached the earth he left it, and he and Asaph, the son of Berechiah, passed round and round the palace, but could find no method of entering; and they wondered. While they were thus engaged, Ramirat, Prince of the Demons, came to the king, and said to him, 'My Lord, why art thou troubled?' Solomon replied, 'I am troubled about this palace, for it hath no door, and I know not what to do.' The Demon answered, 'If thou wilt, I will command the Jinns to mount upon the roof of the palace; perhaps they will find something there, either a man, or some living creature.' So he called to the Jinns, and bade them mount up to the roof, and see what they could behold. They did as they were bidden, and returned, and said, 'We have seen no man there, and no living creature, except one great eagle.'

Solomon said, 'Go, fetch me that eagle.' So they went and fetched him, and when he appeared before Solomon he opened his mouth in praise to God, and then saluted Solomon. And the king said to him, 'How old art thou?' And he replied, 'Seven hundred years.' Then said Solomon,

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'Hast thou ever heard that this palace had an entrance?' The Eagle answered, 'By thy life I know not; but I have a brother who is two hundred years older than I, who hath knowledge and understanding.'

So Solomon commanded and this bird was brought, and he was greater than the former. And he, too, praised the Creator, and then saluted Solomon. And the king said to him, 'How old art thou?' And he answered, 'Nine hundred years.' And the king said, 'Hast thou ever known of a gate to this palace?' The Eagle answered, 'By thy life I know not; but I have a brother who is older than I by four hundred years; he hath knowledge and understanding.'

So Solomon ordered that this bird should be also brought. And after a while the others brought him, carrying him on their wings, for he was so aged that he could not fly. And he was the greatest of the three. He, too, praised the Lord, and saluted the king. And Solomon asked him, 'How old art thou?' And he replied, 'Thirteen hundred years.' And the king said, 'Hast thou ever heard of any entrance to this palace?' He answered, 'By thy life I know not certainly; however, my father told me that there was an entrance to the palace on its western side, but that the sand had covered it up through the number of years that had passed. But if thou wilt command the wind to blow away the sand that is heaped up around the building, the entrance will be disclosed.' So Solomon commanded the wind, and it blew, and scattered the sand that was round the palace, and lo! the entrance was there. The gate was of iron, and very great, and it was as though it were crumbling away from age. And upon the gate was a lock, whereon was written, 'Be it known to you, O sons of men, that we dwelt in this palace in prosperity and delight many years. But when the famine came upon us we ground pearls in the mill instead of wheat, but it availed us nothing. Then we abandoned our palace to the eagles, and laid ourselves down upon the earth, and said to the eagles, "If any man shall ask you concerning this palace ye shall say ye found it ready built."'

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There was also an inscription, 'There shall none enter into this house except he be a prophet or a king. If any such desire to enter, let him dig on the right-hand side of the gate, and he will come upon a chest. Let him break it open, and he will find keys. Then with one of these let him open the entrance gate, and within it he will find a gate of gold; if he open this, and enter in, he will find a second gate, and then a third. Beyond the last he will see a mighty building, in which is a hall bedecked with rubies, and topazes, and emeralds, and pearls. Within is a recess, adorned with all manner of pearls. He will behold, moreover, many fair chambers and courts, paved with alternate bricks of gold and silver. Then let him look upon the ground, and he will see the figure of a scorpion fashioned of silver; let him remove this, and he will find an underground chamber in which are pearls beyond count, and much silver and gold. Then he shall find another doorway, with a lock upon it; and upon the door is engraved, "The lord of this palace was pre-eminent in honour and might. Even the lions and the bears feared his kingdom and majesty. And he dwelt in this abode in prosperity and delight, and he reigned upon his throne. But the hour of death came upon him before the due time, and as he died the crown fell from his head. Enter into the palace, and thou shalt behold many wonders."'

So Solomon opened the door and entered, and saw a gateway on which was written, 'They dwelt in honour and wealth; they died, and the ills of time passed over them; they departed to their graves, and there was not left to them one descendant to walk upon the earth.' He opened the gate, and found a hall of ruby, and topaz, and emerald, and pearl, wherein was written, 'How did I stand! How much did I endure! How I ate and drank! How was I clothed in fine apparel! How did I terrify others! And at the last I was affrighted myself!' He went further and saw a beautiful abode of topaz and emerald. It had three gates. On the first gate was written, 'Son of man, let not fortune deceive thee. For thou must waste away, and go and depart from thy place, and lie beneath the earth.'

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On the second gate was written, 'Be not hasty, but walk circumspectly, for the world is given from one to another.' On the third gate was written, 'Take provision for thy journey, and make ready food for thyself while it is yet day, for thou shalt not be left upon the earth, and thou knowest not the day of thy death.' Then Solomon entered this building, and he saw a seated image; and any who looked upon it would have deemed that it lived; and as Solomon drew near to it, the image trembled, and cried with a loud voice, 'Come hither, ye children of Iblis, for King Solomon is come to destroy you!' And fire and smoke came from its nostrils. Immediately there arose a loud and bitter cry among the demons, and there was earthquake and thunder. But Solomon cried aloud to them, 'Will ye seek to terrify me? Do ye not know that I am Solomon the King, reigning over all the creatures which the Almighty hath created? Behold I shall chastise you with every sort of chastisement since ye rebel against me.' Then he pronounced the Ineffable Name of God. Immediately they were motionless, and not one of them was able to speak; and all the images fell upon their faces, and the sons of Iblis fled, and went and cast themselves into the sea, so that they might not fall into the hands of Solomon.

Suspended round the neck of the image by a chain was a silver tablet, which Solomon took; but he was unable to read it, whereat he grieved greatly, and he said to his princes, 'Ye know what trouble I have taken to reach this image, and now that I have this tablet I cannot read what is written thereon.' While he was considering the matter, and debating what he should do, behold a youth came from the wilderness, and made obeisance to Solomon, and said to him, 'O Solomon, why art thou grieved?' And Solomon answered, 'Because I know not what is written upon this tablet.' The youth said, 'Give it to me, and I will read it for thee; for as I was sitting in my place the Almighty saw how thou wast grieved, and sent me to read it for thee.' Then Solomon gave the tablet of silver into the hand of the young man, who looked upon it, and was astonished,

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and wept, and said, 'The writing is in the Greek tongue, and this is what it says:

'"I, Sheddad, the son of Ad, reigned over a million provinces, rode on a million horses, had under me a million vassals, slew a million warriors, yet I could not withstand the Angel of Death."

'There is also written:

'"Whoso shall read this writing let him not trouble himself greatly about this world, for the end of all men is to die, and nothing remains to man but his good name."

And Solomon, when he had heard what was written thereon, bowed his head and considered that he and his glory would also pass away, and leave but a memory in the minds of men.[3]

The wind carried the carpet and all thereon away from the place of a vanished people, and as they came near to the borders of Palestine Solomon heard a piteous voice exclaiming, 'O God! Thou who hast been the friend of Abraham, release me from this miserable existence.' Solomon descended, and beheld an old man bent in two by age, and trembling in all his limbs.

The king said, 'Who art thou?'

'I am an Israelite of the tribe of Judah.'

'How old art thou?'

'That God alone knows! I ceased to reckon my years when they numbered three hundred, but since that some fifty or sixty more must have passed over me.'

'How is it that thou hast attained to an age the like of which hath never fallen to the lot of man since Abraham died?'

'Because I prayed to God to allow me to behold the greatest of the prophets before I died.'

'Thy prayer is fulfilled!' said Solomon. 'Prepare for death, for I am Solomon, King and Prophet, to whom God hath given power such as was never before given to any of the sons of men.'

Hardly had Solomon uttered these words than the Angel of Death appeared in human form, and took the old man's soul.

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And Solomon said to the angel:

'Since thou hast shown thyself so suddenly, thou must needs have been hidden near at hand.'

'How greatly dost thou err! I rest continually upon the shoulders of an angel whose head reaches ten thousand years' journey above the seventh heaven, and whose feet are five hundred years' journey beneath the earth; whose strength is such that, if God permitted him, he could destroy this earth and all that it contains without any effort. He keeps his eyes always fixed on the tree Sidrat Almuntaha, which bears as many leaves as there are inhabitants on this earth. Each time that a child is born a new leaf shoots forth on which his name is inscribed; and when his allotted time comes, that leaf falls from the tree. At that moment I come, and take the soul.'

'What dost thou do then, and whither dost thou lead them?'

'Each time that a believer dies Gabriel accompanies me. He wraps the soul in a piece of green silk, and a green bird carries it into Paradise, where it awaits the judgement. But I wrap the soul of a sinner in a cloth soaked in pitch, and set it at the door of Hell.'

Then Solomon washed the body of the old man, buried it, and prayed for his soul.[4]

At another time the king floated over a valley inhabited by apes who wore clothes, and ate the food of human beings, built houses to dwell in, and had all manner of implements of war. He descended from the carpet, and went with some of his soldiers into the valley. The apes assembled to offer battle, but one of the oldest counselled them, 'Let us rather seek safety in submission, for our adversary is a prophet of God.' And they sent three apes to treat with Solomon. He was gracious to them, and questioned them of the species to which they belonged, and how it chanced that they had knowledge which belonged to men alone. They replied, 'Be not astonished, for we belong to the human race. We are descended from an Israelitish people, who laboured continually on the Sabbath Day, despite the remonstrances of pious men. Thereupon

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God set a curse on them, and turned them into apes.' And Solomon grieved for them; and gave them the valley for ever, and confirmed it with writing on parchment that no man should do them wrong.

And in the time of the Khalif Omar a body of his troops made as if they would invade the valley. Then an aged ape came with a parchment in his paws, which he gave to their commander, but as no one could read it, it was brought to Omar himself, who had it translated by a Jew who had been converted to Islam. And he knew it for the deed of Solomon, whereupon the Khalif forbade his armies to enter the valley, and they left it to the apes alone.[5]

Upon a certain night the patriarch Abraham appeared to Solomon in a dream, and said, 'God hath given thee wisdom and power more than any other of the sons of men. He hath put under thee the Jinns, who raise for thee a temple such as the world hath never seen. He hath given thee authority over the winds, which perform for thee the service once performed for me by the winged horse Borak, which remains in Paradise until the birth of Mohammed. Wherefore now show thy gratitude, and profit by the ease with which thou canst pass from one place to another to visit the town of Iathrib (Medina), which will one day be a refuge to the greatest of prophets. Visit also the town of Mecca, which will be the place of his birth, also the holy shrine which was the first to be erected after the Deluge, and which I constructed with the help of my son Ishmael, on whom be peace!'

The next day Solomon caused it to be made known that he would undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca, and that any of the Children of Israel might go with him. So great was the number of the pilgrims that Solomon had a new and much larger carpet woven for him by the Jinns. One portion of this was kept for the camels, the cattle, and other beasts, which were destined either to be sacrificed at Mecca or distributed among the poor. There was erected upon it for the king himself a pavilion so thickly overlaid with precious stones that the eye could not bear to look upon it. Seats of gold were prepared for the men renowned for

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piety, seats of silver for the Doctors of the Law; and for all the rest of the people seats of wood. The Jinns and Demons were compelled to fly before the king, for he put no trust in them, and always desired to have them before his eyes. For this reason he always drank out of crystal cups; for he learnt that when his gaze was concealed by a metal vessel they thrust out their tongues at him. The birds flew above the carpet, to be a shelter from the sun.

When all was in readiness Solomon bade the winds raise the carpet, and bear it to Medina. When he reached this town he gave a signal, the wind subsided, and the carpet sank gently down. But he suffered no man to step off it, for Medina was then in the hands of infidels. He went himself to the spot where Mohammed was destined to erect the first mosque. It was then a cemetery, and there he offered up the midday prayer. He returned then to the carpet, and ordered the winds to bear it to the town of Mecca, which was then occupied by an Arabian people, the Djorhamites, who worshipped the true God, and kept the Kaaba as free from the worship of idols as it had been in the time of Abraham and Ishmael. Solomon went into the town with all those who were with him, he performed all the ceremonies prescribed for pilgrims, and offered in sacrifice the victims brought from Jerusalem. Then in the Kaaba he spoke to all the people, and foretold the birth of a prophet in that town, bidding them bring up their children and their children's children in the belief in God and Mohammed, the Prophet of God. After three days Solomon returned to Jerusalem, and it was at this time that he missed the peewit, as shall be related in its proper place.

But, according to another writer, he did not visit the Kaaba, because it was full of idols. When he had gone by the Kaaba was distressed, and complained to God, Who asked it why it was lamenting, and it answered: 'O Lord, Solomon is one of the prophets, all of whose followers believe in one God and in Islam; they have nevertheless passed me by, have not alighted, have not prayed, and have not purified me of idols.' But the Lord replied: 'Lament

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not, but be of good cheer; for I will set thee above all places on the earth. I will cause the pious, who will come and worship here, to circumambulate thee. I will give to my servants grace to rebuild thee, I will grant strength to one of my holy ones to purify thee of idols, I will enjoin the poor and the rich in a religious ordinance to go on pilgrimage to thee, to circumambulate thee, and I will make them so desirous to visit thee, that they will hasten to thee from every deep valley.' [6]

Though Solomon was a man of peace, yet at times it became necessary for him to engage in warfare. How he made use of the carpet for such a cause is thus told.

There was a certain King of the Sea who had a million Jinns under him, who fought for him, and obeyed him. These Jinns were under the command of an Efrit, whose appearance struck terror into the beholders. For he possessed two huge wings, and four arms, two of which were as a man's arms, and two as the legs of lions; his hair was like horses' tails, and his eyes like burning coals, while in the middle of his forehead was a third eye from which came sparks of fire; and his whole body was black and huge. The King of the Sea worshipped an idol made of red cornelian, of which this Efrit was the keeper, and into which he was wont to enter at times to give lying answers to those who consulted it. The king's daughter worshipped the idol daily; she was beyond all the maidens of the land in beauty and loveliness. The Efrit caused an account of her to be sent to King Solomon, who was filled with love for her, and desired to have her as his wife. And he sent a message to her father, saying, 'Marry thy daughter to me, and break thy idol forthwith, and bear witness that there is no God but God, and that Solomon is the Prophet of God. If thou do this, all shall be well between us. But if thou wilt not do this, then know that I can bring against thee armies with which thou hast no power to contend; prepare therefore an answer to the question that shall be asked thee on the Day of Judgement, and put on the garment of death, for I will make thee like yesterday that hath passed.'

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And when the King of the Sea had received this message from the mouth of Solomon's envoy he showed himself proud and overbearing. He called his Viziers around him, and said, 'What answer do ye counsel that I return to King Solomon?' They answered him, 'What can Solomon do to thee? He cannot prevail against thee. But do thou consult the cornelian idol, and do what it bids.' So the king departed immediately, and going in to the idol he slew victims for sacrifice, and then falling down before it he prayed for an oracle. Thereupon the Efrit entered into the body of the idol, and recited a couplet encouraging the king to do battle. So the king took heart, and resolved to wage war with Solomon; accordingly when the envoy came to him to receive his answer he beat him, and sent him off with an insolent message.

When Solomon had received this his heart swelled with rage, and he prepared his forces, consisting of Jinns, and men, and wild beasts, and reptiles, and birds. He ordered his Vizier Ed-Dimiryat,* the prince of the Jinns, to collect warriors for him from every quarter; and he collected for him six hundred millions. He also ordered Asaph, the son of Berechiah, his prince of men, to collect soldiers; and he collected for him about a million. He then made ready his accoutrements and weapons, and together with all his forces of Jinns and men mounted upon the carpet; the birds flew overhead, and the wild beasts marched on the ground underneath, until the expedition arrived at the land of the enemy.

Then he sent a final message to the King of the Sea, desiring him to come to him while there was yet peace between them, and threatening him with destruction if he would not; but the latter replied scornfully, and swore that he would only come to meet him in battle. Then he sent to the people of his country, and collected of the Jinns that were under his authority a million; he gathered together also all demons and devils that dwelt in the islands

* Ramirat is the name of the prince of the Jinns in Jewish tradition, Ed-Dimiryat in Arabic.

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of the seas and on the tops of the mountains. After this he made ready his forces, and opening the treasuries distributed weapons. But as for Solomon he disposed his troops as follows. He commanded the wild beasts to tear the horses of the enemy in pieces, while the birds were to pluck out the eyes of the riders with their beaks, and beat against their faces with their wings. Then Solomon set himself upon a couch of alabaster adorned with jewels, and plated with plates of red gold, and he placed Asaph on the right hand and Ed-Dimiryat on the left, and the kings of mankind on his right, and the kings of the Jinns on his left, and the wild beasts and vipers and serpents before him.

After this the armies joined battle, and strove together in a wide plain for three days; and on the third day calamity came on the enemy. The battle was opened by the Efrit of the idol and his troops; he himself went forth and challenged Ed-Dimiryat to the combat, who advanced like a burning mountain with its smoke ascending, and cried with a loud voice which made the earth quake. He smote the Efrit with a burning fire, against which his arrows were of no avail. Then the battle raged furiously; men charged upon men, and Jinns upon Jinns, the birds fought in the air, tearing out the eyes of the enemy, sometimes with their beaks, at other times with their talons; the wild beasts on the ground bit the horses, and tore in pieces the men, until the greater part of the army lay on the earth like trunks of palm-trees. All this time the Efrit and Ed-Dimiryat were contending together, until each wearied the other, and the Efrit became weak, and his companions and troops were exhausted, and they fell before the army of Solomon. As for the Efrit, he fled for the space of three months before Ed-Dimiryat, but at last he fell down through weariness, and was taken. He said to his captor, 'By Him who hath exalted thee and abased me, pity me, and take me before Solomon.' But when he came before the king he was evil intreated; for Solomon caused a pillar of black stone to be hollowed out, in which he placed the Efrit up to his armpits, and sealed him with his ring; after which he

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caused Ed-Dimiryat to convey the pillar and its contents to a distant place, where it was discovered by those who were going in search of the City of Brass.[7]

Another marvellous journey undertaken by Solomon, although not on the magic carpet, may be included in this chapter. He determined one day to descend into the depths of the ocean in order to see what wonders lay there. So he caused a very large glass bottle to be constructed, in which he placed himself, and he made his servants lower him into the sea by a rope which was attached to the neck. He told them that when he shook the rope they were immediately to draw him up. But his sister, having learnt what had happened, feared lest he should be drowned; so she rushed to the sea, and threw herself in, that she might find him. 'O Lord,' she cried, 'do not allow me to perish until I have found him. Transform me into a fish, that I may swim around in safety, and bring him back; and then, if thou wilt, let me live for ever in the sea.' And in answer to her prayer God transformed her body, so that the lower portion of it became that of a fish, and even to this day she is swimming about in the ocean, seeking her brother, but unable to find him.

As for Solomon, he descended to the bottom of the sea, and there wondered at the order which reigned in the world of fishes. When they were about to wage war on each other they made terrible preparations for the combat. He saw there sea-men and sea-horses, and many other wonders. But while he was there an immense fish came by. It was of such vast extent that for three whole days and three whole nights it kept swimming past the bottle, and yet he never saw its tail. Accompanying it were tens of thousands of other fish, arranged in ranks and battalions; and in front of each battalion went a larger fish, who was in command. In its passage the enormous fish rubbed against the bottle, and shook it; this agitated the rope, and the servants, believing this to be the signal agreed on, drew Solomon up again. When he had reached earth he related all the wonders he had beheld to the old men his councillors. Then he set his army in order according to

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the method of the fish. Thus he became invincible, and overcame all other beings, and compelled them to pay tribute.[8]

Reference-Notes

1. Mirkhond, pp. 75, 81; *Jewish Encycl.*, s.v. 'Solomon in Rabbinical Literature'; Salzberger, *Die S.-Sage*, p. 90.
2. Mirkhond, p. 82.
3. Wünsche, *Midrasch Ruth Rabba*, p. 84.
4. Migne, ii, col. 856.
5. Ibid., col. 867.
6. Ibid., col. 858; Mirkhond, p. 81.
7. *Arabian Nights* (Story of the City of Brass).
8. Schischmanoff, *Légendes religieuses bulgares*, p. 84.

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V

SOLOMON AND THE BIRDS AND BEASTS

Solomon was king not only over the worlds of men and of spirits but over all created things. In order to rule and judge the lower animals it was needful for him to know their language; therefore the power was given to him of understanding the cry of all four-footed beasts, the hissing of the snakes, the utterance of all that dwelt in seas, rivers, and inland lakes, the humming of the insects. He knew what the trees in woods and the flowers by the wayside said to themselves. He loved especially the language of the birds because of their soft notes. The cock and the hoopoe were his closest friends: the cock because of its clarion cry, the hoopoe because it was able to detect the presence of water even in the worst desert. Of his dealing with this division of his empire many legends are told.

The Swallow's Forked Tail

Solomon assigned to each creature its particular food, to one the flesh of weaker beasts, to another the herb of the field or the fruit of the wood. But to the Serpent he said: 'Thou shalt nourish thyself with the blood of Man.' So the Serpent concealed himself in the undergrowth, lying in wait for men passing by, and darting out upon them to feed himself with their blood. But Man complained so loudly that his cry came to the ears of the great king. And the king said: 'Why complainest thou so bitterly?' Then Man answered: 'Lord, the serpent lives on our blood until our race is near to being cut off from the earth.'

The son of David pondered over the complaint of Man, and in the end he commanded that all created beings should be gathered together upon a vast plain. The lion, the

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tiger, the wolf, the horse, the elephant, the eagle, the vulture, and thousands of others came at the king's will; and Solomon sat upon his throne and said: 'If there be any among you who hath a complaint to make before me, now let him speak.'

Then Man drew near to the throne and made obeisance and said: 'Lord, I pray that the Serpent be commanded to choose the blood of some other creature for its food.' The king said: 'Wherefore?' Man answered: 'Because I am the chief of all created things.' Thereat the other animals began to murmur; some shrieked, others growled, barked, bayed, howled, or bellowed; but the king commanded silence and said: 'Let the Gnat, which is the smallest of creatures, seek out whose is the daintiest blood in the world, and whosesoever it be, even though it be that of Man, I swear to give it to the Serpent. Ye shall gather together again in twelve months' time and hear the testimony of the Gnat.'

The animals went their way and in the course of a year the Gnat came to all of them and drank of their blood. On the appointed day, as she went to the king's assembly, she met with the Swallow, who saluted her and asked whither she was bound. The Gnat answered: 'To the assembly of all the beasts.'

Then said the Swallow: 'I had forgot the charge which our Lord the King laid upon thee. Tell me now, whose blood is the daintiest?'

The Gnat answered: 'Man's blood.'

The Swallow made as if she did not understand, and said again, 'Whose blood?' But when the Gnat opened her mouth to reply, she flew at her and plucked out her tongue. Then the Gnat continued wrathfully on her way, but the Swallow followed her closely, and together they came to the place of assembly.

When all beings had been gathered together the king said to the Gnat: 'Hast thou drunk of the blood of all beasts?'

The Gnat made a sign to show that she had fulfilled her task, and the king said: 'Whose is the daintiest blood?'

Now the Gnat could not tell what to do, for since the

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Swallow had plucked out her tongue she could do nothing but buzz, 'Z-z-z-z-z'.

The king was amazed and asked her, 'What sayest thou?' But the Gnat could only buzz continually before the throne, until the Swallow came forward and did obeisance and said: 'Lord, the Gnat hath been smitten with sudden dumbness. But as I journeyed hither beside her she told me that of all the beasts upon the face of the earth, the blood of the Frog is the daintiest.' And she turned to the Gnat and said, 'Is it not so?' but the Gnat could only buzz in answer.

Then the king commanded that from thenceforth the Serpent should feed on the Frog's blood and Man should live in peace, and when he had thus given judgement he broke up the assembly of the beasts.

But the Serpent was very angry and darted himself upon the Swallow to destroy her. The Swallow flew swiftly upwards, so that the Serpent could only seize and drag out the feathers from the midst of her tail. Since then the Swallow has always had a forked tail and the Serpent must nourish itself on the Frog's blood. But the Swallow lives always with Man, and his children are not ungrateful, for they pursue other birds, but they grant the Swallow a place in their houses and hold its presence as a token of good luck.[1]

The Bat

Solomon, king of men and beasts, called together one day all the birds of the air, and said: 'Give me each of you one of your feathers, for I am old, and I need a soft couch whereon I may rest my body, enfeebled through weight of years; out of your feathers I will make for myself a soft bed.' All the birds of Heaven, the eagle and the vulture, the turtle-dove and the blackbird, the quail and the partridge, the house-sparrow and the hedge-sparrow, took one of their feathers, and offered it to King Solomon. But the Bat said to herself, 'What use is *one* feather for the bed of David's son?' So she tore out all her gleaming plumage, and brought it to the king, who said to her: 'Be thou blessed above every bird!' Then he considered that in days to

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come the Bat would be an object for the gibes of other birds on account of her nakedness, and he said, 'Thou shalt fly only at night-time, and neither men nor birds shall behold thee in the darkness.' And since that time the Bat is the bird of night.[2]

The Hoopoe's Crown

Once, when the king was on a journey, he grew faint beneath the heat of the sun, and when he saw a flock of hoopoes flying by he prayed them to form themselves into a shelter, so that the burning rays might not strike on him. Immediately the King of the Hoopoes called his subjects together, and made them move as a cloud over Solomon's head. The king desired to show his gratitude for this service, and he promised to grant them whatever request they should make of him.

Then the King of the Hoopoes came to proffer his request. And Solomon said to him, 'Hast thou considered well what thou seekest?' The Hoopoe answered: 'We have considered, and we desire to have golden crowns on our heads.' Then said Solomon: 'Golden crowns ye shall have, but behold, thou art a foolish bird. Yet when evil days come upon thee, and when thou seest the folly of thine heart, then turn again to me, and I will help thee.'

So the King of the Hoopoes departed from Solomon's house with a golden crown on his head. And all the other hoopoes bore golden crowns also, and were proud and haughty thereat. They betook themselves to seas and ponds, and walked upon the margins, to admire themselves as in a looking-glass. But the Queen of the Hoopoes was before all others in pride, for she seated herself upon a branch, and would not speak to her cousins and kindred, nor to any of the other birds who had been her friends, for she thought within herself, 'These are common birds, but I wear a crown on my head.'

Now there was near by a bird-catcher, who set a trap for birds, in which he placed a piece of broken mirror. A hoopoe flew thither, went to admire himself therein, and was straightway caught in the trap. The man looked at

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the bird, and saw the glittering crown on its head; he slew it, and brought the crown to Issachar ben Jacob, the cunning worker in metal. Issachar said, 'It is but a crown of brass!' And he gave the bird-catcher sixty farthings for it, and told him if he found any more to bring them to him, but to say nothing of them to any man. Thereafter the man caught many more birds, and sold their crowns to Issachar ben Jacob.

But one day the bird-catcher met with a man who was a goldsmith, to whom he showed two of the crowns. And the goldsmith told him they were of pure gold, and gave him a talent of gold for them. The knowledge of the value of these crowns soon spread abroad throughout all the land of Israel, and there was to be heard everywhere the whirring of bows and slings. Birdlime was prepared in every town, the price of traps increased, and the makers of them did much business. No hoopoe could dare to appear but it was forthwith shot or trapped.

It seemed that the days of the hoopoes were numbered. A great cry of mourning went up, and soon there were few living to bewail their destiny. Then the unfortunate King of the Hoopoes began his journey, and flew through the most desolate regions of the world to the palace of Solomon. And when he was there, he stood before the steps of the golden throne, and with tears and groans declared the misfortune that had befallen his race. But Solomon looked kindly upon him, and said, 'Did I not warn thee of the folly of choosing golden crowns? Pride and vanity have been thy undoing. But in order that ye may remember the service which ye did me, your crowns of gold shall be changed into crowns of feathers. So ye shall live in peace on the earth.' And when the bird-catchers saw that the hoopoes no longer wore golden crowns they ceased to pursue them; and the folk of the hoopoes prospered and increased.[3]

The Lark's Crest

There lived a pair of Larks, cock and hen, husband and wife. One day the hen laid her eggs on the road on which Solomon was wont to go. Her husband said to her: 'Have

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I not forbidden thee to lay eggs on the king's highway? If he ride out in our direction he will assuredly trample them to pieces!' Then spoke the wife: 'Not so, for the Prophet of God is full of tender pity towards us.' This speech was borne to Solomon's ears, and he was well pleased. So when he rode forth he sent a Jinn, and commanded him 'Place these eggs under thy feet, and take good care that thou dost not damage them in any way!'

After Solomon had come forth in his chariot, and passed by without touching the eggs, the wife said, 'Did I not tell thee that the Prophet would deal compassionately with us?' Then said the cock, 'In return I shall make him a present.' His wife asked him, 'What hast thou to give?' and he answered, 'I have a grasshopper, which I was keeping for my children.' Then his wife said: 'I too have a date, which I was keeping for my children.' Then they took their presents, and flew away to the palace of the king, where they found him sitting on his throne. They laid their gifts at his feet, and fell down and did obeisance. But Solomon smiled at them, and as a sign of his pleasure he stretched forth his hand and stroked their heads. And it is said that from the king's action arose the crest on the head of the lark.[4]

The Cow

David the king sat one day before the door of his palace, his son Solomon being with him. And there came a Cow, which stood before Solomon, and said: 'I am a Cow belonging to certain of the Children of Israel. I have brought twenty calves into the world, all of which they have slaughtered, and now they have resolved to slaughter me also, because I am old.' And Solomon interpreted the saying to the king. Then the king said to her, 'Dear Cow, thou art there for the purpose of being slaughtered.' 'True, O Prophet of God!' interrupted Solomon. 'Nevertheless where is thy compassion for her? As long as they were slaughtering her calves they did not inform her of her fate!'

Then Solomon arose, and the Cow went with him to

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guide him along the road, until they reached the dwelling of her owners. As Solomon stood before the door, the people came out to him, and said, 'What wilt thou?' He answered, 'Sell me this Cow, and do not slaughter her.' Then they asked, 'Who hath told thee that we intend to slaughter her?' Solomon answered, 'She herself hath told me.' Then they said, 'We will give her to thee, but we ourselves will all die this night.' Solomon said, 'How do ye know that?' They answered him, 'We have read in an old writing that a Jewish youth would be endowed with the knowledge of the speech of animals, and we have besought the Lord to let us die only when we have seen him. Now have we lived to see thy advent!' Then Solomon took the Cow, and went forth. But when evening came her owners died.[5]

The Boastful Pigeon

Solomon was sitting by a window of his palace, and he overheard the talk of two Pigeons upon the house-top. The male bird said haughtily, 'Who is Solomon the king? And what are all his buildings? Why, I, if I put my mind to it, could break them all down in a minute!' Hearing this, Solomon leaned from the window, and calling the boaster, asked him how he dared to speak so falsely. 'O Prophet of God,' said the bird, 'be favourable to me. I was talking to a female, and who can help boasting then?' The king laughed, and bade him begone, but warned him not to speak so again. The Pigeon, making a profound reverence, flew to rejoin his mate, who at once asked why the king had summoned him. The bird said: 'He heard what I said to thee, and entreated me to forbear!' Solomon was wroth at his vanity and turned both birds into stone, as a warning to men not to boast, and to women not to encourage them. These birds can still be seen in Jerusalem. In the south wall of the Dome of the Rock are two small slabs of marble, the veining of which represents two birds perched on opposite sides of a vase.[6]

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The Cock's Advice

Solomon desired to have houses built for his soldiers, and ordered all the land-animals to perform the work, and to fetch lime and stones. The Elephant said to him, 'O King, I too am a king, I do not work. But I will send my servants to work for thee.' So his people came and drew stones and lime, while the spirits laid out the foundations upon which the houses were to be built. The birds also, together with their king the Hoopoe, were summoned to help at the building.

On each day when the king sat in judgement, the birds, the spirits, and all the animals were wont to come and listen. And one day the Elephants came, and laid a complaint against Solomon before his father the Prophet David. They said, 'Thy son hath given all the work to us, we alone are performing it, and none of the other beasts are compelled to labour at it.' Then the Camel was summoned, and it was said to him, 'To-morrow shalt thou undertake the work of the Elephants.' But it answered, 'My work consists in providing milk for the workmen to drink!' Then the Cow was summoned, and her answer was, 'From me comes the milk for the Prophet Solomon!'

Next the Ass was summoned, and ordered to draw stones and lime. It did so, and thus the Elephants were relieved from labour.

For a long time the Ass worked. Then he became wearied, and said to the Cow, 'I am very weary from the work, but I fear to tell this to Solomon, so I seek counsel from thee.' The Cow answered, 'I will give thee prudent counsel, but thou must not tell it to any man, for if thou dost, thou wilt betray me to the king. When the attendant comes in the morning, make as if thou wert ill.' But Solomon had overheard the advice which the Cow had given. On the following morning the keeper of the Asses came, but they were all sleeping, and had the appearance of being ill. Then he went and informed Solomon that all the Asses were ill, and the king commanded that all the Cows should draw the stones and lime. Thereupon the son

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of Solomon and his counsellors asked, 'Why are the Cows drawing the stones and lime?' Solomon demanded, 'Why ask ye this?' They answered, 'Where shall we get milk to drink?' The king said: 'Ye can drink Camel's milk!'

The Cow was a month at the work, when she became very sorrowful, and said to the Ass: 'Thou art my friend, I have given thee prudent counsel. Arise to-morrow, and relieve me from this affliction which is upon me.' To this the Ass made no reply, but still feigned illness. Then the Cow was seven days longer at the work, and after this she said to the Ass, 'I have heard that the king hath commanded thee to be slain to-morrow, if thou dost not arise.'

When Solomon, who was near by with his wife, heard the words of the Cow, he commenced to laugh. His wife said to him, 'Why didst thou laugh?' He replied, 'There was nothing at which I laughed!' She said, 'Assuredly there was something at which thou didst laugh!' But he said: 'I was thinking on things in the world!' She said to him, 'Tell me of what thou wast thinking, or if thou wilt not tell me why thou hast laughed, thou shalt set me free, for I will not live with thee any longer!' But Solomon loved his wife greatly, and said to her, 'Give me seven days' respite, and then I will tell thee.' Then said his wife, 'I do not consent to that: either tell me at once, or else set me free!' Then he said, 'Wait until I have uttered two prayers, and then I will tell thee.' When he had prayed, he called together all beasts and fishes, all mankind, and all dwellers in the water, and said to them, 'I have a dispute with my wife, and desire that ye reconcile us.' Then said all the people to the wife, 'Be reconciled to thy husband!' But she would not hear them, and said, 'If he desires that we should be friends, then let him tell me why he laughed.' But the king feared greatly, for when God had given him the power of understanding the language of birds and beasts He had warned him that if he told any man that he possessed such knowledge he would surely die.

So it seemed impossible to reconcile Solomon and his wife. Then he called upon the birds, but their mediation

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had no effect. Then he called upon the water-dwellers, but they also failed. Then he became as one bereft of understanding, for if he revealed the secret he would die, and if he kept silence his wife would leave him. So he seemed as if he were about to enter the gates of death. And all the creatures of the earth mourned because the king was about to die.

When the morning broke the Cock crew, and the Hound immediately seized him in his mouth. When Solomon perceived this, he asked, 'Why didst thou seize him?' The Hound made answer, and said, 'This Cock is without shame. Every being in the world is grieving because thou art as one about to die, but the Cock alone crows, as if he had no regard for thee.' The Cock replied, 'Solomon hath no sound judgement. I have many wives, and I am the only male amongst them. If one of them becomes troublesome, I beat her: but he hath only *one* wife, and now he seems about to die because of her curiosity. If he took a stick in his hand, and cudgelled her, then she would repent, and would not seek to pry any further into the cause of his laughter.' When Solomon heard this, he took a stick and beat his wife, who thereupon exclaimed, 'I repent! I do not desire to know why thou didst laugh!' Then Solomon became whole again, and all creatures rejoiced that he had recovered through the sound understanding of the Cock.[7]

The Elephant and the Ants

Once the King of the Ants drew near to Solomon, and made a complaint. He said, 'Thy elephant crushes to death under his feet thousands of my subjects. We protest against his cruelty. Cause him to cease from this, for if thou wilt not, then we ourselves will find a means of preventing him.' Solomon was scornful of him, and smiled, saying, 'Do what ye may!' So the King of the Ants went away in a rage, and summoned all his people. When they had considered they determined to dig a deep pit on the road along which the elephant went each day, and only to leave a light roof of earth over it. They did this, and when

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the elephant trod upon the place he crashed into the pit and could not get out; whereupon the ants surrounded him, and ate him, until they left nothing but bare bones. Solomon waited in vain for his elephant for three days and three nights, and at length sent his servants in quest of him. These discovered the cunning of the ants, and reported the matter to Solomon. When the latter heard this, he stroked his beard, and said, 'Even if a man be a giant, it would be well for him not to have an enemy as large as an ant!'[8]

The Raven and the Nightingale

Amongst the birds that performed the duty of acting as a canopy over Solomon's head was a Nightingale, whose thoughts always turned with longing in the spring-time towards the gardens filled with roses. One day, as they were flying together, he said to his mate, 'It is my counsel and ardent desire that we make our way to the gardens where the rose-buds are blooming.' 'Repose of my heart!' replied the female, 'let it be as thou sayest. Let us obtain permission from Solomon, and then go with easy minds whither we desire. For as we are his subjects we cannot depart without his word. We know that among the birds there are to be found many envious and evil-spoken ones, who would carry the tale of our disobedience to him, and thus draw his anger upon us. But if we obtain leave we need fear nothing.'

But to this counsel he made no reply, so preoccupied was he by his passion for the roses, and suddenly, without a note of warning, he spread his wings, and crying in ecstasy 'O Rose!' took flight in the direction of his desire. When his gentle companion saw him, she too quitted her post, and followed him, saying to herself, 'It is better that Solomon's anger should fall on both of us, rather than on him alone.'

The two nightingales at last entered a garden which was filled with roses of every description. Through the midst of it flowed murmuringly a limpid rivulet, on either bank

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of which stood a rose-bush. In these the two nightingales perched, one in each bush, and intoxicated with their desire for the rose commenced to sing and lament with notes as gentle as the summer wind.

Now it chanced one day that Solomon seated himself on his throne under the bird-canopy, and as soon as he had done so a ray of the burning sun fell upon him through the opening caused by the absence of the nightingales. In anger he called the Simurgh,* the sultan of the winged beings, and said to him :

'What bird hath dared to depart from its place without permission? Discover this at once, and come and tell me!'

In obedience to this order the Simurgh inquired of the birds. Then the Raven, the bird of sable hue, the Simurgh's bailiff, came forward, and told his master that the two nightingales were absent. The Simurgh carried this news to the king, who thereupon said :

'Let these two birds be seized, and cause them to appear before me!'

The Simurgh bade his servant go in search of the culprits, and the Raven spread his pinions, and flew this way and that in search of them. At length, as he rested in the top of a high cypress, he espied them in their rose-garden. He beheld them entranced and intoxicated, complaining to the rose-bud that it had scorned their love. But as they thus sang ravishingly the rose-bud smiled, and then opened into a full-blown flower. And suddenly they heard near them a voice of ill omen :

'O Nightingale, thou hast disobeyed Solomon the king, and he hath sent me to bring thee to his presence. Delay not therefore, but come.'

'Thou art an informer among birds!' replied the Nightingale. He shut his ears to the voice of the messenger, so possessed was he by his love for the rose-bud, and said, 'Whatever may be the wish of Solomon, we will not return, either with thee or without thee.'

* A fabulous bird, or griffin (combination of bird and animal). In the *Shah-Nameh* it lived on Mount Alberz, and nursed the infant hero Zal.

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When the Raven saw that the Nightingale refused to follow him, he was filled with wrath, and returned alone to the presence of Solomon, where he related how his message had been received, and in what manner the nightingales were occupying themselves. Solomon heard his report, and then said, 'I pardon the Nightingale his disobedience. It is indeed the season for the rose-gardens, and I know that each year a longing for the rose-bud seizes him. Let him remain there undisturbed, and released from service, until his insensate madness is allayed by his contemplation of the beauty of the rose.'

The Raven immediately left his presence, and, summoning the other birds, related to them what had occurred, in order to stir up jealousy and envy against the nightingales. They listened attentively to his discourse, and when he had ended they chattered angrily among themselves, saying, 'The insolent nightingales have left their post without leave, they have gone away, and have refused to return and obey the king! Notwithstanding this, he hath pardoned them, and freed them from service! And while they are taking their ease in a rose-garden we are compelled to remain here in slavery! This cannot be endured by us!'

Then that envious being, the black Raven, said:

'Ye bird-folk, winged people, if my voice may penetrate your minds, this is the advice I shall give you. Let us kill these two nightingales and bury them in the earth. That will be a lesson to their fellows, tempted to fly to rose-gardens, not to disobey the command of Solomon!'

All the birds present applauded this counsel, for the poison of envy had entered their hearts, and with the Raven at their head they closed their ranks and prepared to set forth upon their errand. At this moment there appeared before them the gigantic Simurgh.

'King of birds!' said the Raven. 'What thinkest thou of the determination we have taken?'

The Simurgh listened to all that they said, and replied, 'It would be better to have the goodwill of Solomon upon your purpose.'

'A short space of time since,' answered the Raven, 'I laid

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before Solomon an account of all that had passed, and how the nightingales had behaved themselves in respect to his command, but he did not regard me. Nevertheless I told him the truth, and I only need witnesses to bear out what I have said. I can refer for this to the Simurgh, the wisest of birds'—thus cunningly hinting that he desired false testimony to be borne. Then each bird went to its own abode.

Some days after this King Solomon held a council, and there were present the sons of men, the Jinns, the beasts, and the birds.

'The occasion is fitting,' thought the Raven. 'Let us profit by it!' Thereupon he prostrated himself before the judgement-seat, and cried:

'O Solomon, I have heard some strange and unworthy words from the mouths of the nightingales. I was angered greatly at this, and resolved to make thee acquainted with what they had said.'

The king said: 'Say on.'

'Know, O King,' continued the Raven, 'that when I thy slave was sent by the Simurgh to cause them to appear before thee I found them, as I have said, and announced to them thy will. But the Nightingale answered me in fiery tones, "How am I bound to Solomon? I am weary of his service. Am I still in this garden the slave of Solomon? Each day we humbled ourselves before him. I would not give a single petal of the rose for a hundred Solomons or a thousand Simurghs! Begone, O bird of corruption! Hasten away from this place!" Such were his words to me. Thus the Nightingale, freed from toil, enjoys without interruption a happy tranquillity. But the winged peoples cannot endure the thought of his conduct. Prostrate in the dust at thy feet they only demand that the Nightingale shall be brought back to receive the punishment he merits, that it may be an admonition to any others of his kind who may attempt the like.'

At these words of the envious Raven the brow of Solomon became black with anger.

'Take heed to thy words, Raven!' he answered. 'It is

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the ill fortune of the Nightingale to be calumniated. Do not speak lying words concerning him. It is in my mind that sooner or later this mad desire for the rose will pass from him, and he will return to his duty.'

'Vicegerent of God!' replied the Raven. 'If I can bring witnesses to prove the truth of what I have said, is it permitted me to do so?'

'Cause them to appear before me!' said the king.

Then the Raven went to seek his accomplices. He brought the other birds in a flock into the presence of the king, and with one voice they exclaimed, 'O Solomon, all that the Raven hath told thee of the impassioned state of the Nightingale is true, his report is correct, and that bird hath indeed spoken as he has said.' Thus in the presence of Solomon they put forward a feigned accusation, they bore false witness, and supported the evil designs of the bird of darkness.

Then the king commanded the Falcon, the chief of the birds of prey:

'Depart immediately for the rose-garden where the nightingales are, and bring them to me in thy talons, only take good heed not to kill them.'

The Falcon hastened to obey Solomon's commands, and set out for the rose-garden, and the Raven went before him as a guide. When they came to the place, they perched in the top of a cypress, and from that position beheld the two unsuspecting birds paying court to the rose-bud, and chanting love-songs. The rose-bud, under the influence of the burning love of the bird, commenced to smile. The Nightingale contemplated the flower, and, as its passion grew more ardent, it again began its song, until at last the bud opened.

But the evil-minded Raven croaked to the singer:

'O insolent one! Thou hast deserted the service of Solomon! Thou hast disobeyed his orders! Look above thy head, and see the pitiless executioner of the king! Now continue thy song, if thou wilt!'

At this the Nightingale raised his eyes, and saw hovering in the air above him the Falcon who knows no mercy, and

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at this sight his heart failed, and he fell, as one bereft of his senses. Then coming to himself he commenced to supplicate.

'All-powerful master of the world——!' he cried.

Then confusion and pity moved even the hard heart of the Falcon, who, with tears in his eyes, took a nightingale gently in each of his terrible talons, and, guided by the Raven, carried them back, and placed them before Solomon.

Thereupon the king called a council, at which were present men, Jinns, birds, and beasts, and all these desired greatly to know the end of the matter, saying among themselves, 'Let us see if what hath been told to Solomon is truth or falsehood.'

Then the king bade the Raven call his witnesses. The first of these was the Simurgh, who was a prince in the court of Solomon, and had authority over other birds. To him Solomon said, 'King of the winged peoples, what hast thou to say of the Nightingale? Hath the Raven spoken truth?'

'Vicegerent of God!' replied the Simurgh. 'The words of the Raven are true, and he is right in saying that the Nightingale hath thus spoken of thee.' And having borne lying testimony, and roused the king's anger, he added with cunning, 'But the Nightingale was so overcome by his ardent desire for the rose that he did not know what he was saying. It would be well to pardon him his foolishness.'

At this the Nightingale turned to him, and said wrathfully:

'Double-faced and double-tongued bird, mayst thou be accursed before God and man! What dost *thou* know of the pleasures of the rose, or the delight of the rose-bud? On this question thy envious witness will not be received against me, O thou possessed of an unclean spirit!'

At these words the Simurgh said no more, and was as one bereft of the power of speech.

Then Solomon turned to the Phoenix, and demanded its testimony.

'All-powerful King!' replied the Phoenix. 'In this matter

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the Raven hath had regard to the truth, and the Nightingale hath indeed spoken so. He hath been intoxicated with love, and he who is so possessed is as it were out of his mind. He hath shown himself full of pride and presumption, for he who, by his haughty speech, sets himself on a higher level than his equals, is evidently deprived of the power of considering the true meaning of what he says.'

At these unworthy words of the Phoenix the Nightingale cried :

'O Phoenix, I am not proud. Pride is thy besetting sin, and thou art a master in the practice of it. As for me, I am poor and humble, and I sing before great and small alike. But thou choosest as thy companions the most proud and haughty of the birds ; thou dost not mix with the little ones ; thou separatest thyself from the common people, and believest thyself lordly above all created beings, wherefore thou liest without ceasing. Nor will I consent to the witness of one so full of pride.'

At these words the Phoenix said no more, and was as one bereft of the power of speech.

In fine, Solomon summoned the Hoopoe, the Screech-owl, the Peacock, the Parrot, the Cuckoo, the Magpie, the Ostrich, and many other birds. All bore testimony that the Raven had spoken truly. Then he turned to those birds who were prepared to testify on the other side. And first he called the Swallow, who said :

'O King of the world, the Nightingale is a friend whom thousands love. He is without jealousy towards any one, great or small. The Raven hath brought a lying report of him. The Nightingale does obeisance to thy loftiness and dignity, O King of the world, he knows it to be over that of all kings. Nor have the words that have been attributed to him even entered his mind. And this is my testimony on the matter.'

When he heard this, the king said to the Raven :

'What hast thou to say of the testimony of the Swallow ? '

'He hath lied,' was the answer. 'But it is needful also in such a trial as this that two witnesses of repute should bear testimony.'

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Thereupon the king turned to the Stork, and said:

'What canst thou say of this matter?'

'Vicegerent of God!' replied the latter. 'The Nightingale hath not uttered what hath been reported, nor hath he ever had such a thought in his mind. At the time when thou didst pardon him thou didst also set him free from all service. Thereupon the evil-contriving Raven, filled with jealousy and envy, took counsel how he might bring the Nightingale to disgrace and punishment. He went to the Simurgh and to the other birds, and there blew up the flame of discord and hatred, with what result we have seen.'

Then the Pigeon was called, and coming forth, declared:

'O King, the Stork is the daughter of a *Hadji* (a Mecca pilgrim). She is herself a pilgrim, for each year she visits the Kaaba of Mecca. Her word is to be believed. She is a bird worthy of being the Sheik of the winged peoples. The Swallow deserves to be on an equality with her, for she is incapable of evil intention. As an assiduous reader of the Koran her word may be believed, and her testimony be accepted. As for the Raven, he is an envious bird, a hypocrite, a spy. His calumnies, his lies, his jealousy, his perfidy, and his accusations have been directed against the Nightingale, and he hath dared to bring a false charge to the ears of the Vicegerent of God. In their testimony the other birds also have spoken against the truth.'

Then came forward successively the Turtle-dove, the Goose, the Duck, and the Pheasant, who confirmed all that the Swallow, the Stork, and the Pigeon had said.

Then Solomon the king said:

'Let the abhorred Raven be driven forth from the palace. Let him henceforth spend his time in devouring the bodies of the dead, and let no other bird be his associate for ever.'

All the false witnesses were brought into disrepute and disgrace. The nightingales were pardoned, and released from all menial service. Furthermore, Solomon ordered that in the day-time they were to perch before his throne, and delight his ears with their notes; while during the night they had liberty to depart to the gardens, and pour forth their love to the rose.[9]

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REFERENCE-NOTES

1. Dähnhardt, *Natursagen*, i, p. 332.
2. Ibid., p. 335.
3. Ibid., p. 326.
4. Salzberger, *Die S.-Sage*, p. 82. A variant is on p. 84.
5. Ibid., p. 59.
6. Hanauer, *Folk-lore of Holy Land*, p. 48.
7. Meinhof, *Afrikanische Märchen*, p. 51. In the introductory portion of the *Arabian Nights* a very similar story is told of a certain merchant. A somewhat different version is given in Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, iv, p. 138.
8. Tcheraz, *L'Orient inédit*, p. 18.
9. Abbreviated from a very long Turkish story in *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, ii, p. 83.

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VI

THE FINDING OF SHAMIR

It is said in the First Book of Kings (vi. 7) that the Temple *was built of stone made ready . . . so that no tool of iron was heard in the house while it was in building.* When Solomon began the work, he came to the Rabbis and said: 'How may I build the Temple without iron?' For it was written in the Law (Exod. xx. 25) that no tool was to be used. They counselled him to use Shamir. Shamir was a tiny worm, in size as a grain of barley; it was the seventh of the ten marvels created on the twilight of the Friday in the week of Creation. It was preserved by being wrapped in wool and placed in a leaden box filled with barley bran. So powerful was it that even the hardest substance could not resist it; if it were placed upon stone on which lines had been drawn it would cause them to split immediately. By its help Moses had engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on the breastplate of the High Priest, for he had written the names upon the stones and held Shamir over them, and the writing had sunk deeply into the stones.

Solomon inquired of the Rabbis where this worm might be found, but they were not able to tell him. Then the king commanded a male and a female Jinn to be brought before him, and sought to learn the secret from them. They answered that they knew nothing, but that Ashmedai, king of the demons, might know. The king asked where Ashmedai dwelt, and they said:

'He dwells upon a certain mountain, where he has dug for himself a well of clear water and covered it with a great stone, sealed with his own signet. Daily he ascends into heaven, to the celestial seats of wisdom, and descends again to earth, to the terrestrial houses of knowledge. Then he goes to his abode, and when he has examined the seal with

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care, to know if aught has touched it, he refreshes himself with a deep draught of water, and seals up the well, and departs.'

Then Solomon sent thither a mighty man, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, to whom he gave a chain inscribed with the Name of God, a quantity of wool, and many leathern bottles filled with wine. When Benaiah arrived at the place where the well or cistern was, he dug a deep pit on the slope of the mountain below the well, so that all the water ran into the pit, and he stopped the hole between with wool. And he made a little hole in the upper side of the well and poured wine through it into the well, and when all was poured in he stopped this hole also with wool. Then he climbed into a tree close at hand and hid himself in its branches.

When Ashmedai returned he approached the well and examined the seal, and lifted the stone to drink. But he found beneath it not water but wine, and fearing evil he would not drink, repeating to strengthen himself many passages from the Holy Writings: *Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise; wine and new wine take away the heart* (Prov. xx. 1; Hos. iv. 11). After a little time he was so afflicted by his thirst that he yielded and drank till he was satisfied, and immediately fell into a deep sleep. Benaiah descended and fastened the chain about his neck, and Ashmedai awoke and strove against the chain, but he could not break it; and Benaiah cried out to him: 'The Name of thy Lord is upon thee.'

Then he submitted, and Benaiah led him away. On the road he rubbed his body against a palm-tree and snapped it with his weight, and was about to lean also against the hut of a poor widow, but she ran out to him and begged him to forbear. And he turned aside, and as he did so he fell and broke a bone in his leg; and he said, 'This is the meaning of what is written: *A soft tongue breaketh the bone*' (Prov. xxv. 15).

They went on their way and came upon a blind man who was lost. Ashmedai set him in the right path. Afterwards

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they found a drunken man who was in a similar plight, and him also Ashmedai set right. When Benaiah asked him why he had treated both alike, he answered that the blind man was known in heaven as a perfectly righteous man and that any who helped him would be rewarded; the drunkard was a perfectly wicked man and therefore ought to be given that small pleasure, for he would have none thereafter.

They met with a wedding-procession, at the sight of which Ashmedai wept, and when Benaiah in astonishment asked him for a reason, he said: 'I weep because the bridegroom has not thirty days to live, and his widow will have to wait thirteen years before his infant brother is old enough to marry her.'

Next they came upon a man in a shoemaker's shop, who was ordering a pair of sandals, and was anxious that they should be made strong and durable enough to last seven years; Ashmedai laughed at this, and, being questioned, answered that the man had not seven days to live.

Then they met with a wizard practising magical arts before a crowd. But when he saw him Ashmedai mocked at him and said: 'That man is not a wizard or he would know that under his feet lies a great treasure.'

They came at last to the royal house, but three days passed before Ashmedai was brought into the presence of the king. On the first day he asked, 'Why does not the king send for me?' And they said, 'Because he has drunk too much, and the wine has overpowered him.' Then Ashmedai took a brick and set it on another, and they told Solomon of it, and the king said: 'That is to say, Go, make him drunk again.' On the next day Ashmedai asked the same question, and they said, 'The king has eaten too much.' Then Ashmedai removed one brick from another, and when they told the king he said: 'That is to say, Take away a part of his food.'

When Ashmedai came into the presence of Solomon he took a measuring-rod and measured a space of four cubits upon the ground. Then, pointing to Solomon, he said: 'Lo, this man after his death will own nothing of this world but four cubits of ground, yet now, having brought the

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whole world into subjection, he desires to overcome me also.'

The king said: 'What need have I of thee? But Shamir is my need, that I may begin to build the Temple.'

Ashmedai answered: 'I have not Shamir, for it is under the guard of Sara-Dima, the angel of the oceans and the waters, who lends it to none but the woodcock. For the woodcock, having taken an oath to return the worm, bears it to the rocky summits of mountains where neither trees nor grass can grow. He lays the worm upon the rocks and crags and thus splits them; afterwards he collects the seeds of trees and plants and drops them on the prepared ground so that the barren mountain tops became covered with verdure. Therefore the woodcock is called "Mountain-breaker".' He bade Solomon, if he desired to gain Shamir, search for a woodcock's nest full of young, and lay over it a sheet of glass, so that when the mother-bird returned with food and found herself unable to reach them she would bring Shamir to break the glass.

Benaiah did this and hid himself near the nest. At the moment when the glass was fractured he ran forth with a shout, seized Shamir which the frightened bird had left as she flew up, and took it to the king. But some say that the woodcock was so troubled because she had broken her oath to Sara-Dima that she went straightway and hanged herself.[1]

Another tradition of Shamir says that after its creation it was hidden beneath the throne of God until it was needed to cut out the two Tables of Stone and to engrave the Ten Commandments upon them, after which it was again hidden. But Satan discovered it and obtained possession of it and hid it lest it should be used for the building of the Temple and to his own hurt. Then all the Rabbis counselled Solomon and he compelled the Evil One to arise out of the Bottomless Pit and commanded him to restore Shamir. Satan dived into the depths of the sea and returned again carrying a stone of a thousand-tons' weight, which he cast at Solomon's feet, and it broke in pieces and Shamir came forth. Then the king and all the

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Rabbis shouted for joy, but Satan groaned for anguish and raged with anger. And the king went to the stone-quarries and drew the outline of every stone that would be needed in the work, and set the worm on the marks. And as it crawled along them the stone split asunder into its proper form and took upon itself a polish of such incredible beauty that for this alone the Temple would have been the wonder of the world.[2]

But Mohammedan writers tell the story differently. For they say that the noise which the Jinns made in cutting the blocks of stone or hammering the plates of metal, together with the piercingly shrill note that the precious stones gave out as they were bored, grew insupportable. All the inhabitants of Jerusalem complained to the king. Thereupon he called together the Children of Israel and the Jinns and inquired of them if in any way the work might be more quietly carried out. One of the Jinns answered that the demon Sakhar, who was not obedient to the king, was able to work stone and to split it without noise.

The king said: 'Bring him before me.' But they cried out with one accord: 'O Prophet of God! Sakhar is so strong that all the demons together could not overpower him. But he goes each month to a well upon a certain island and drinks of the water. Our counsel is to draw off all the water and substitute wine; thus when he comes and finds no water he will drink of the wine and become drunken and helpless, and we will seize him and bring him to thee.'

The king commanded that it should be done, and when they had made everything ready they hid behind the trees of the island. But when Sakhar came to the well and smelt the wine, he uttered a cry and said: 'O wine, excellent art thou, but thou takest away the understanding of man, and makest the prudent foolish, and arousest remorse.' So he went forth and would not drink. But on the third day he came again, tormented by a burning thirst, and cried in despair: 'What God hath decreed I cannot avoid!' Then he drank deeply and staggered a little way and fell to the ground. The Jinns rushed from their hiding-place, bound

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him, and carried him away, while he breathed fire from his mouth and nostrils. But when he came into the presence of Solomon he knew the power of the ring and fell with his face to the earth. Then, raising his head, he said: 'What is thy will, O Prophet of God? I keep myself aloof from thee and I do not mingle with the children of men.' And when Solomon had told him of the complaints of the people of Jerusalem and how he desired the secret by means of which stones could be cut noiselessly, Sakhar answered: 'The secret is mine; let there be brought to me the nest of a sea-eagle with the eggs therein.' Now there is none among the birds which can see so far and so clearly as the sea-eagle. The Jinns brought the nest and left it as it was, eggs and all, in a waste place. Sakhar asked for a bell-shaped cover of thick white dazzling glass, covered the nest with it, and left it so.

When the sea-eagle returned it was unable to find its nest until it soared high above the earth and flying east and west over wood and hill it espied the nest under the glass covering. Immediately it flew down from the sky and struck the glass with its talons but could not break it. It uttered an angry cry, soared up again, disappeared in the sky, and did not return for a day and a night. On the following morning it returned, carrying in its beak a fragment of the stone Samur, and placed it upon the glass, which parted silently in two. Then the eagle carried off the nest and the eggs, but let the stone Samur lie on the ground, and Sakhar took it and gave it to Solomon. It was white as milk, clear as crystal, and glowing like fire. Solomon inquired of the Jinns where it was to be found, and they said: 'O Prophet of God, it is to be found only in a mountain in the extreme west, which is called Samur Mountain, but thither none of the sons of men are able to come.' Then the king commanded the Jinns to journey thither and bring him as much of the stone as they were able, and when they had done so the labourers worked at the building of the Temple without noise.[3]

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Reference-Notes

1. *Jewish Encycl.*, s.v. 'Shamir'; Wagenseil, *Sota*, p. 1072; Hershon, *Genesis with a Talmudical Commentary*, p. 188; Schwab, *Le Talmud de Jérusalem*, vii, p. 339; *Revue des études juives*, viii, p. 65; Hershon, *A Talmudic Miscellany*, p. 96. There is in Slavonic a dialogue between Solomon and Kitovras, which appears to be the story of Solomon and Ashmedai (see *Revue des études juives*, viii, pp. 202 ff.).
2. *Folk-lore*, xviii, p. 74.
3. Salzberger, *S. Tempelbau*, pp. 47 ff.; Grünbaum, *Neue Beit. z. sem. Sagenk.*, p. 227.

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VII

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

THE greatest achievement of the reign of King Solomon was the building of the Temple of God, a house *exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries* (1 Chron. xxii. 5), for which so much had been made ready by David his father. It is supposed to have stood on the place where, a millennium before, Abraham had prepared to offer up Isaac. This site had also been the cause of the strife between Cain and Abel, for when they were in the field together they cried, 'Let us divide the earth between us,' and one said, 'The Temple shall be built upon my share,' and the other said likewise. Later it was in Benjamin's portion, and this is the meaning of the saying, *And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept.* In the Hebrew, the word 'neck' is in the plural, and this, according to Rabbi Eleazar, is because 'Joseph wept in anticipation of the fall of the *two* Temples which were to be built in Benjamin's portion'.[1]

When the Angel of Death had stayed his hand from plaguing the Children of Israel because of David's sin in numbering them, the king called all the people together and commanded them to build the Temple on the place where God had showed mercy on them. And when they had commenced the work there came a certain poor man who desired to prove their zeal. He said to all the people, 'Behold, in the place where ye are building I have a plot of ground which I need, and ye must not take from me that which is mine.' They answered: 'O thou man, who among the Children of Israel hath not a claim to this place equal with thine? Be not thou the niggardly one among many, and trouble us not in the work.' But he said, 'I know my right and ye know not yours.' They said,

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'With what dost thou desire to be appeased? For otherwise we will seize on the ground by force.' But he answered: 'Find that out in conformity with the wisdom of God and of David.' Then they brought him before the king, who said, 'Fulfil his desire.' But they asked, 'For how much shall we purchase it, O Prophet of God?' He answered, 'Buy it for a hundred sheep,' but the man cried out, 'I desire more, O Prophet of God.' The king answered, 'Buy it for a hundred cattle'; but he said, 'I desire more.' The king said, 'Buy it for a hundred camels', but the man said again, 'I desire more. For thou buyest it for God, and He is liberal and not niggardly.' David answered, 'Tell me thy price for the land and I will buy it of thee', and the man said, 'Buy it for a garden full of olives and dates.' The king promised him this price, but the man said again, 'Thou art buying it for God and canst not be niggardly.' David said to him, 'Ask all that thou wilt!' Then the man said, 'Thou art more noble towards God than I. But build a wall round the plot and fill it with gold.' But when the king answered, 'That is an easy thing', he cried out again and said, 'O Prophet of God, may God forgive me all my sins! For that is dearer to me than all thou canst give. I have sufficiently put thee to the proof.' So he gave up all right to the ground, and the work of building proceeded. But the king was not allowed to finish it because he was a man of blood.[2]

When the work was beginning, and the labourers were digging the foundations, they came down to the waters of the Great Deep, which tumultuously surged up and threatened to overwhelm the work and Jerusalem and the whole world as in the days of Noah. King David despaired and knew not what to do till he was counselled to engrave upon a stone the Tetragrammaton, the worker of wonders, the name of God, יהוה. And this being done and the stone set in the orifice through which the waters came, they subsided and the world was saved from the danger, and the digging proceeded.[3]

When King David was gathered to his fathers, Solomon his son carried on the work with all diligence. For assistance

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and aid he wrote to Hiram, King of Tyre; the letter is given by the historian Eusebius:

'Solomon to Hiram, King of Tyre, Sidon, and Phoenicia, his friend and his father's friend.

'Know that by grace of the great God I have taken possession of the kingdom of David my father, by whom also I was commanded to build a Temple to the Creator of heaven and earth. Now I beseech thee by this letter that thou wilt send me artisans and labourers from thy kingdom to serve me until I bring to an end this work dedicated to God, as I am commanded. I have sent to Galilee, to Samaria, to the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Gileadites, bidding them provide each month all things that are necessary from their land, that is to say, each month ten thousand *cors* of corn and as many of wine; the oil and other things needful will come from Judaea, and I have commanded Arabia to supply the animals for meat.'

Hiram sent a letter in answer:

'Hiram to Solomon the great king, greeting!

'Blessed be God, the Creator of heaven and earth, who hath chosen so noble a man, the son of so noble a father. Thy letters have delighted my heart and I have rejoiced and given thanks to God that thou hast received the kingdom. I have sent thee eighty thousand Tyrians and Phoenicians, and amongst them is an architect, a man of Tyre, whose mother is a Jewess of the tribe of David. He hath understanding in all manner of building, both in the theory and practice of the work. For the rest, it will be thy part to write to the governors of the districts, in order that they may be diligent to provide all that is necessary for so great a number of men.'

Josephus, whose version of these letters is closer to those in the Bible, says that copies of them were preserved in his own day among the Tyrians, and that if any one would know of them with certainty he had but to go to the keepers of the records and he could read them himself.

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Solomon wrote also to Vaphres, King of Egypt, who replied that he would send him eighty thousand men of Egypt, but desired that they should be sent safely home when the work of building the Temple was completed. It is said, however, that Pharaoh sought to trick Solomon, for when he had received the king's letters he bade his astrologers by their art choose out all those men who would die before the end of the year, and these he sent to Solomon. But as soon as the king looked upon them he knew what their fate would be, and having given to each of them a coffin and a shroud he sent them back to Egypt, with letters to Pharaoh, bidding him, if he needed materials for the burial of the dead, send only a request and not those men who were about to die. For this reason it was said that *Solomon's wisdom excelled all the wisdom of Egypt* (1 Kings iv. 30).[4]

According to one tradition the stones from the quarries for the work were brought by the female Jinns; but another says that they cried out with a loud voice and moved themselves to the site of the building. For a certain Rabbi says: 'It is written, *The House, when it was in building* (1 Kings vi. 7). It is not written *which they built* but *when it was in building*; that is, of itself it built itself. *Out of stone made ready at the quarry* was it built, that is to say, the stones broke themselves off, and flew thither, and laid themselves upon the structure. This is not to be wondered at, for it is written, *A stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den* (Dan. vi. 17). Are there then stones in Babylon? This verse signifies that the stone rolled thither from Palestine in the shortest possible time and laid itself upon the mouth of the den. Now if God would do so much for Daniel, a mere mortal, He would do as much and more for the erection of the Holy House.'[5]

The king sought everywhere for precious and beautiful things to adorn the Temple. He bade one company of the Jinns to gather from the mines rubies, sapphires, topazes, emeralds, gold, silver, and all jewels; another company he sent to the seas to bring pearl and coral; a third company he commanded to transport the stones. When all the

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materials and tools were ready the stone-cutters cut tables and surfaces; the masons placed white, green, and yellow stones over each other until they had completed the walls. The columns were built of pure transparent stone. Ceiling and walls were encrusted with precious gems; the splendour of them made the place upon the darkest night as bright as day. For each of the ten candlesticks ten thousand talents of gold were used; these, by being passed through the furnace ten thousand times, were reduced to one talent. Moreover, in the courts of the Temple Solomon planted golden trees which produced all manner of fruits according to their season; when the wind blew through them the fruit fell to the ground, as it is written, *The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon* (Ps. lxxii. 16). Upon this fruit the priests of the Temple fed. When the heathen entered the Holy Place, all the trees withered, as it is written, *The flower of Lebanon languisheth* (Nahum i. 4), but the Holy One will cause them to flourish again, as it is written, *The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it* (Isa. xxxv. 2). Amongst the wonders in the Temple was a house with its interior whitewashed. If a pious man entered it his appearance against the walls was of a dazzling whiteness, but if a wrongdoer he seemed black. This frightened many and caused them to turn away from vice and wickedness. In a corner of the Temple stood a staff of ebony; if a descendant of a prophet grasped it, it did him no harm, but if any other his hand was hurt by it.

In the course of the building Solomon found that he needed three beams which should be very thick and very long. He sent men to search for trees that might be converted into such beams, but though they went through all forests and mountains they found nothing. In the end they heard of trees that would serve. For when the Patriarch Lot had repented of the grievous sin he had committed in an hour of drunkenness he was bidden do penance. And this was his penance. He was to cut three young shoots from a tree, scorch them in the fire, plant them at a cross-road, and water them three times a day. When they began to put out buds he would know that his sin was forgiven.

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Lot did as he was commanded, and watered them for three years in spite of Satan, who strove to prevent him. At the end of that time buds began to appear and Lot knew that his penance was done. By the time of Solomon these shoots had grown into magnificent trees, and the king ordered them to be cut down and brought to Jerusalem. There they were sawed to the proper length, covered with gold and silver, and put in their appointed places. But they were too long; they had to be taken down, shortened, and replaced. And for the second time they were too long. This happened again and again, until they told the king, and when Solomon heard of it he cried out, 'Be thrice accursed, O trees, ye who mock at me and at the Holy Place!' He commanded them to be thrown as a bridge across the brook Kedron, which was known as 'the bridge of the three accursed trees', and they remained there until the coming of the Queen of Sheba.[6]

Of the help that was given to the king in the work it is said in the poem *Masnavi*:

> When Solomon laid the foundations of the Temple
> Men and Jinns came and lent their aid to the work,
> Some of them with goodwill and others on compulsion,
> Even as worshippers follow the road of devotion.[7]

How Solomon overcame the rebellious Jinns, and compelled them to the work and the various tasks he assigned to them is told in the book that is called *The Testament of Solomon*.

Among those who were working at the building was a young lad, the son of the chief overseer. Him Solomon loved above all the artificers and workmen, giving him double wages and a double ration of food. Notwithstanding this the lad fell sick and grew thinner and paler every day, till the king took him aside and asked him what ailed him. He answered, 'O King, when our day's work at the Temple is done and after sunset I lie down to rest on my bed, immediately there cometh an invisible evil demon, who taketh away half my food and my wages and sucketh the thumb of my right hand, for which reason I am becoming

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weak in soul and body.' Then the king went into the unfinished Temple and prayed fervently that this demon might be delivered into his hand and that he might gain authority over him. Then Michael the Archangel appeared and gave him a ring, on the seal of which was engraved the Pentalpha, which is a five-pointed star made up of five A's interlaced, by the virtue of which he could subdue all demons, both male and female. On the next day Solomon called the lad to him, and giving him the ring said: 'When the demon comes and is beside thee, cast this ring into his bosom, and say to him: "In the name of God! King Solomon calleth thee!" Heed not then what he says, but run to me quickly.'

So the lad took the ring gladly and departed. At the customary hour after sunset the demon appeared, this time as a burning fire, but the lad did as he was bidden, hurling the ring against him and saying the words. But the spirit cried out as if in pain: 'O child, why hast thou done this? Only take away this ring and I will show thee all the gold hidden in the earth. Set me free and do not bring me before Solomon.' But the boy did not heed him, but ran to the king, saying: 'I have brought the demon as thou hast bidden me, and behold he standeth without the palace, crying and beseeching, and offering me gold and silver if I will set him free.'

When Solomon heard this he rose up hastily and went out into the courtyard of the palace, where he saw the demon flickering and quivering like a flame. The king said to him: 'What is thy name?' And the demon answered: 'I am called Ornias.' On this Solomon sealed him with the ring and bade him cut stones in the Temple. But he refused to do so, saying that he feared the iron implements,* and offering, if he were set free, to bring all the demons into obedience to Solomon. The king, finding him still rebellious, invoked the Archangel Uriel, who descended from heaven and constrained Ornias to do as Solomon had commanded. But first the king gave him the ring and bade

* In folk and fairy tales, both in the East and the West, evil spirits are represented as dreading iron.

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him bring Beelzeboul, the chief and the mightiest of the demons.

Ornias went and came to his king Beelzeboul and said to him: 'Arise, come hither, for Solomon calleth thee!' Beelzeboul answered: 'Who is this Solomon of whom thou speakest?' Ornias cast the ring into his bosom, saying: 'Solomon calleth thee.' Beelzeboul roared aloud and flame came from his mouth, but because of the virtue of the ring he was constrained to follow Ornias and to come to Solomon. When the king saw Beelzeboul he gave thanks to the Lord who had given him power over the prince of the demons, but for the sake of his kingship he caused Beelzeboul to be set in a seat of honour. Then he questioned him of his authority and of the evil which he wrought upon earth, and afterwards set him to saw Theban marble for the Temple. And all the demons began to cry out and howl when they saw their king coming among them as a slave.

Many other demons Solomon caused to be brought into his presence by virtue of the ring, and when he had questioned them he sealed them with the seal and set them to diverse tasks in the building of the House. First there came to him a spirit named Onoskelis, as a beautiful woman; whom Solomon put to the task of spinning hemp into ropes used for drawing the materials. Then there came the demon Ashmedai, strongly bound; and Solomon asked him, 'Who art thou?' But he answered: 'Nay, who art *thou*?' The king said in anger: 'Darest thou from thy bonds to answer me thus?' 'And how should I answer thee, seeing thou art a child of man but I am the child of an angel and of a daughter of earth. I tell thee that thy kingdom shall after a little be broken up, and thou thyself shalt rule over us but a space, and then we shall be free and shall go among men, and they shall adore us as gods.' Then the king commanded him to be bound more tightly and scourged with leathern thongs, till he bowed himself and told his name and the evil that he did among mortals, and prayed that he might not be sent into water. But he set him to carry ten water-jars, and to knead wet clay with his feet.

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Then there came a demon who appeared in the form of a pillar of dust which whirled through the soldiers and bystanders, in order to frighten them. But the king spat on the ground where the pillar had arisen and sealed it with his seal. The movement ceased, and Solomon commanded the demon to seize heavy stones and throw them up to the workmen on the highest parts of the Temple.

Next there came a demon in the form of a man, but without a head, and out of his neck ascended a jet of fire. After him came another in the shape of a hound, who offered to show Solomon a mine in the mountains where was a very precious green stone which might be used for the adornment of the House. So Solomon called a servant, and, giving him the ring, sent him with the hound, who brought him to the spot as he had promised. And altogether from this mine Solomon took two hundred shekels' weight of the green stone, which he used for the supports of the table of incense. When they had returned, Solomon bade the hound watch over the headless demon, so that the fire which he breathed forth might serve as a light for the artificers who worked during the night-time.

Then the king summoned another spirit, and this time there came one in the shape of a roaring lion, who said that he had a legion of demons under him. These Solomon appointed to gather wood for the furnace of the Temple, while their lion-shaped king was bidden to saw it up into small logs with his teeth.

After this there came a female spirit, with flashing eyes and long dishevelled tresses, whose head only could be seen, for her body was invisible. On her Solomon laid no task, but commanded that she should be hung up by her hair in front of the Temple, so that all the Children of Israel who passed by might see her in captivity, and might thereupon glorify God who had given such power to their king.

Then there came one in the shape of a horse in front and a fish behind, who said that he brought sea-sickness upon men. On him also Solomon imposed no burden, but had him cast into a jar of sea-water; and this, when sealed with the ring, was set within the Temple.

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And many other demons appeared in various shapes. Some of these, who were rebellious, Solomon caused to be shut up in prison. Others were condemned to do heavy work in connexion with the building of the House; others again were given light tasks, such as melting and preparing the precious metals. And so the work drew towards completion.

Now it chanced one day that an aged workman came and threw himself on the ground before Solomon, and said to him, 'O King, I have an only son, who beats and insults me, plucking the hair from my head, and threatening me. I beseech thee, do me right upon him.' And Solomon pitied him on account of his years, and caused the son to be brought before his judgement-seat. And when he came the king asked him why he did evil to his father. But he vehemently denied that he was ever guilty of such impiety. So Solomon exhorted the father to be reconciled to him, but he refused, and said he would rather have him put to death. And as Solomon was about to pass sentence he saw the demon Ornias laughing among the bystanders. Being angered at this, he dismissed all, and summoning the demon before him, he asked, 'O accursed one, why didst thou mock me?' And Ornias replied, 'I mocked not at *thee*, but at the old man and his son. For in three days the son will die untimely, and yet his father desires to have him put to death.'

On hearing this Solomon dismissed Ornias, and ordered the men to be brought before him again, when he bade them live in amity for five days, and then return to him. When they had departed he again called Ornias, and interrogated him, saying, 'How didst thou know this?' And Ornias replied, 'O King, we spirits ascend unto the firmament, and fly about among the stars. And when we are there we hear the sentences that are pronounced on mankind. But we cannot abide there long, but lose our strength, and fall like the leaves of a tree, and when men see us falling they say that it is a shooting-star.'

At the end of five days Solomon ordered the old man and his son to be brought before him. But this time the

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father appeared alone, with a sorrowful countenance, and clad in the garb of a mourner. Solomon asked him, 'Where is thy son, and why art thou clad thus?' And he replied with tears, 'O King, I am childless, for two days ago I bore out my son to burial.' Then Solomon knew that the demon Ornias had spoken the truth.

Now the Temple was near completion. But there lay on the ground a very large stone, chosen and precious, which, for its beauty, Solomon desired to place in the head of the corner; but when all the workmen and all the Jinns together tried to lift the stone, and put it in the place designed for it, they were unable even to move it. And the king despaired.

But there came a messenger bearing a letter from Adares, king of the Arabians, which read thus:

'Adares to Solomon, greeting!

'We have heard that thou art a man to whom the Lord hath granted power over all spirits and demons which are in the air, or on the earth, or under the earth. Now there is in our land of Arabia a certain evil spirit, which is in the form of a wind. This wind begins to blow at early dawn, and continues until the third hour of the day. Its breath is harsh and terrible, and slays both man and beast. Forasmuch as thou art able to subdue spirits, we beseech thee to prepare a device by which it may be taken and subdued. And all Arabia will be at peace with thee, and serve thee, because now we are in a great strait. Farewell!'

So Solomon called one of his servants, and said to him, 'Make ready thy camel, and take with thee this ring, also an empty wine-skin. And when thou hast reached that part of Arabia where the evil spirit blows, place the skin on the ground, turn the mouth of it in the direction from which the wind blows, and hold the ring in front of the opening, so that the spirit may blow through it. And when the bag is tightly distended with wind, then thou wilt know that the demon is within. Then immediately tie up the mouth of the skin, and seal it with the seal, and

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placing it carefully on the camel, bring it hither to me. Now depart, and the Lord be with thee!'

So the servant did as he was bidden, and departed on his camel. But when he arrived at the place the people of the land would not believe that he could do what he had undertaken to perform. And on the first morning after his arrival, when the wind had commenced to blow, he obeyed the command that had been given him, and the demon entering in through the circle of the ring, distended the wine-skin to its utmost. Then the servant hastily fastened the neck of the skin, and sealed it in the name of the Lord. He remained there yet three days in order to see if he had taken the spirit. But the evil wind blew no longer, so all men knew that the demon was securely imprisoned, and they rejoiced greatly, and sent the young man on his way laden with gifts.

When he had come to Jerusalem he took the skin and placed it on the ground in the Temple-court. And Solomon entered the Temple, being troubled because he could not raise the stone. But when he entered the court the wine-skin containing the demon arose, and walking seven steps upon its stumps, fell on its mouth and did obeisance. And Solomon commanded it to stand up, and it did so on its four legs, fully blown out. Then he questioned it as to its name. The demon within the skin replied, 'I am Ephippas, who dwelt in Arabia.' Then said Solomon, 'And what canst thou do?' It replied, 'I can do many things, and amongst them I am able to remove mountains.' The king said, 'Canst thou lift this stone, and place it where I desire?' It answered, 'O King, I can.' So the skin first became flattened, as if all the air had gone out of it, and slipped itself underneath the stone; then it blew itself out again, so that the stone was lifted upon its back, and walked along on its stumps, carrying the stone, until it placed it securely as the king desired.

Marvelling at its great strength, Solomon said again, 'Canst thou do more than this?' It replied, 'If thou wilt permit me to go and obtain the assistance of the Demon of the Red Sea, I can bring to thee a pillar which will serve

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SOLOMON AND THE DEMON IN THE WINESKIN.

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as adornment for thy Temple.' So Solomon permitted him to depart, and in a little while he saw the two demons coming through the air, and carrying an enormous column of stone. And Solomon thought in his mind on the power they possessed, and fearing lest they should use it to overturn him and his works, he drew a circle round them with his ring, and so caused them to remain suspended in mid air. And to this day men may see the pillar hanging in the firmament, but the demons they cannot see, for they are invisible. And afterwards Solomon questioned the Demon of the Red Sea. He replied that he was named Abezithibod, and that it was he who, long before, had hardened Pharaoh's heart, and had urged the magicians, Jannes and Jambres, to withstand Moses. When the Egyptians had pursued after the Israelites he had gone with them, but remained behind in the waters of the Red Sea, until Ephippas had come to fetch him. Then Solomon made them both swear that they would support the pillar, and not let it fall. To this they swore, but they told him that on the day it fell the world would come to an end.[8]

Solomon made the lives of the Jinns bitter with hard labour and unceasing toil. Of them all Iblis alone was free, for he had never been brought into subjection to Solomon. He came one day to comfort them as they were working at the Temple, and said to them, 'How do ye fare?' They answered, 'We have no rest in our condition.' He said to them, 'Do ye draw stones from the quarry, and then return empty thither?' They replied, 'Yes!' Then he answered, 'Then have ye some ease!' The wind reported this saying to Solomon, who thereupon ordered them to drag loads both going and coming. Again Iblis came to comfort them, and said, 'How do ye fare?' Then they reported to him how a greater burden was laid upon them. He said, 'Do ye sleep at night?' They answered, 'Yes!' He replied, 'Then have ye some ease!' The wind again reported this to the ears of Solomon, who ordered them to work day and night. When Iblis came again they told him what had happened. But he comforted them by saying that when matters came to the worst

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they generally grew better. And so it came about, for, according to one story which will be told in due course, Solomon died before the Temple was finished.[9]

The lot of the mortals who were also employed on the Temple was remarkable. While they were engaged in its construction none of them fell ill, or died, or met with any accident, or suffered from any disease of the eyes; their shoes or belts did not get lost. Neither spade nor shovel was broken, nor was any artificer's tool mislaid. On this account it was said, *And all the work was peace!* * But with the completion of the edifice the workmen's lives came to an end also. Why was this? Because the Holy One—praised be He!—did not desire that the people of the world should take these men and cause them to construct other buildings, so that they might be able to boast, 'These are they who erected the Holy House for Solomon.' What then is the force of the word *peace*? The Holy One said, 'On Me rests the obligation, to give those men their due reward.' [10]

When finally the Temple was finished nothing remained but to bring the ark within its walls. But as Solomon and the procession of priests drew near the great gates of the Temple fell to in their faces, and refused to allow themselves to be opened. According to some, they did so because Solomon had spoken presumptuously when he said, 'The House which *I* have built' (2 Chron. vi. 33). But Solomon cried, '*Lift up your heads, O ye gates: and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors: and the king of glory shall come in.*'

But the gates were horror-stricken, for they thought that by the saying, 'King of glory', Solomon meant himself, and they prepared to hurl themselves upon the head of the blasphemer, and crush him to the earth. But pausing a little, they asked, '*Who is this king of glory?*'

And Solomon answered, '*The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle:*' and added, '*Lift up your heads, O ye gates.*'

* 1 Kings vii. 51 ('All the work was *ended*'). There is a play on the Hebrew verb *shālam*, which means both 'to be at peace' and 'to be ended'.

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And again the gates asked, '*Who is this king of glory?*' And Solomon answered, '*The Lord of hosts, He is the king of glory*' (Ps. xxiv. 7–10). And forthwith the gates opened, and admitted the Ark, for they perceived that it was of God, and not of himself, that Solomon spoke.

But the Holy One said to the gates, 'Ye have vindicated My glory. By your life I swear, that if ever I shall let My house come to desolation, no man shall take you by violence.' And so it was that when Nebuchadnezzar took part of the vessels of the House of the Lord, the gates were not taken, for they were concealed in the earth, as it is written, *Her gates are sunk into the ground* (Lam. ii. 9).

But, according to another story, the closing of the gates was a sign for David. He had prayed to God for forgiveness of his sins, and this was granted. Not content with this, and desiring that some signal proof of forgiveness should be manifested to his enemies, he cried, *Show me a token for good: that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed* (Ps. lxxxvi. 17). The Holy One replied, 'Not in thy lifetime shall it be shown, but in that of thy son, Solomon.' And when Solomon prepared to bring the Ark in the gates closed against him. Thereupon he uttered twenty-four prayers, but these were of no avail. Then he began, *Lift up your heads*; but this, too, was unheeded. In despair he cried, *O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the good deeds of David thy servant* (2 Chron. vi. 42). And immediately the gates opened. And at this the countenances of David's enemies became as black as the bottom of a pot, for all men knew that his sins had been forgiven.[11]

After the building had been completed, Solomon feasted all the nobles and princes of the children of Israel, and he said, 'This house hath been constructed only for the worship of God the Most High; it must not remain empty for a single hour of the theologians of God, and of readers about the blessings of the other world.' [12]

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Reference-Notes

1. Hershon, *A Rabbinical Commentary on Genesis*, p. 34; *Genesis with a Talmudical Commentary*, p. 455.
2. Salzberger, *S. Tempelbau*, p. 6.
3. *Folklore*, xvi, p. 422.
4. Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* (trans. in Fabricius, *Cod. Apocr. Vet. Test.*, ii, pp. 1022–4, and Migne, *Dict. des Apocr.*, i, col. 957); *Antiq. Jud.*, viii. 2–6, 7; Salzberger, *S. Tempelbau*, p. 15.
5. Salzberger, *S. Tempelbau*, p. 10.
6. Mirkhond, p. 76; Salzberger, *S. Tempelbau*, pp. 19, 32; Schischmanoff, *Légendes religieuses bulgares*, pp. 67 ff.
7. *Masnavi*, p. 186.
8. *Testament of Solomon* (Greek and Latin in Migne, P. G., cxxii, cols. 1315–58. An English translation is in *Jewish Quarterly Review* for October, 1898).
9. Salzberger, *Die S.-Sage*, p. 113.
10. Salzberger, *S. Tempelbau*, p. 17.
11. Ibid., pp. 22–4.
12. Mirkhond, p. 77.

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VIII

SOLOMON AND THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

I

THE visit paid by the Queen of Sheba, that mysterious Queen of the South, to King Solomon to hear his wisdom and to see with her own eyes the splendours of his kingdom has always appealed to the imagination of men, and many tales are told of it, some of which we shall relate in this chapter.

A Jewish writer, in the second Targum on Esther, gives the following account of her visit, and of the circumstances which brought it about. Once on a time King Solomon invited all the neighbouring kings to visit him, and lodged them in the royal palace. When his heart was merry with wine, he commanded the wild beasts, the birds, the reptiles, the devils, demons, and spirits, to be brought in order that they should dance before them, to show his greatness to the other kings. The royal scribes called them all by their names, and they came together without being forced, or led by the hand of man. All were present, except the cock of the wood, who did not appear. Then the king in anger commanded that he should be brought before him, or else he would destroy him. But when the cock of the wood came into his presence he stood, and spoke as follows:

'O Lord of the Earth, incline thine ears, and hear me. Are there not three months since thou hast put counsel in my heart, and words of truth upon my tongue? Since then I have not eaten any food, nor drank any water, and I have flown all over the world and made an inspection. I said to myself, Is there a country or a kingdom which is not subject to my Lord the King? Then I saw a certain country, the name of whose fortified town is Kitor, whose dust is more precious than gold, and where silver lies about in the streets like dung. Trees also are there standing from

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primeval times, and are watered from the Garden of Eden. Great crowds of people are there from the Garden of Eden, having crowns upon their heads, who know nothing of warfare, nor can they draw the bow. For, indeed, I have seen one woman who rules over them all, and her name is Queen of Saba. Now if it shall please the king I shall gird up my loins like a mighty man, and shall arise and go to the city of Kitor, in the land of Saba, and shall bind its kings and its nobles in chains of iron, and shall bring them to my Lord the King.'

And because this saying pleased Solomon, the royal scribes were called and a letter was written and was tied to the wings of the cock of the wood, who thereupon lifted up his wings, and soared up in the air, and compelled other birds to fly with it. Then they came to the city of Kitor, in the land of Saba. Towards morning the queen went out to worship the Sun, when the multitude of approaching birds obscured the sunlight, so that the queen out of astonishment took hold of her clothes and rent them in pieces. The cock of the wood now came down, and she observed that a letter was tied to its wings; and she took it and opened it, and read what was written therein.

'From Solomon the King, peace to thee and to thy princes. Thou must know that the Holy One—blessed be He!—hath made me to rule over the wild beasts, over the fowls of the air, over devils, demons, and spirits, and that all kings, of the East and the West, of the North and the South, come to salute me. If thou wilt come and salute me I will show thee greater dignity than I will show to all the kings that are sojourning with me: but if thou wilt not come to salute me I will send kings, legions, and riders against thee. But if thou shalt ask, What kings, legions, and riders hath King Solomon? know then, that the wild beasts are the kings and the legions, and the riders are the birds of the air. My army is of devils, demons, and spirits, who will strangle you in your beds, the wild beasts will slay you in your houses, and the fowls of the air will devour your flesh in the field.'

When the queen heard the words of this letter she rent

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her clothes again. Then she sent for the elders and chief men of the city, and said to them, 'Know ye what Solomon hath sent to me?' They answered, 'We do not know Solomon, nor do we esteem his kingdom.' But she put no confidence in them, nor listened to their words, but caused all the ships to be collected and loaded with presents of pearls and precious stones. She also wrote a letter, and sent it by them. This was the tenor of it:

'From the city of Kitor to the land of Israel is in truth a journey of seven years, but because of the questions which I desire to ask thee I shall come in three years.'

And after three years the Queen of Saba came to King Solomon, who, when he heard of her arrival, sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada to meet her. He was as beautiful as the sunrise, and as the white lily which stands by the brooks of water. Now when the queen saw Benaiah she lighted down off the animal on which she rode. But he said: 'Why didst thou dismount?' She answered him, 'Art thou not King Solomon?' He replied, 'I am but one of the servants which attend on him.' Thereupon she turned to her great men and uttered to them this proverbial saying: 'If ye do not see the lion, ye see his lair. Though ye do not see King Solomon, yet ye see a man of good countenance, who standeth before him.' Then Benaiah conducted her to the king.[1]

In such a way the Jews relate the matter up to the meeting of the king and queen. But Mohammedan writers give the story at greater length.

As Solomon was returning on the carpet from Mecca a ray of sunlight penetrated through the bird-canopy overhead, and smote him. By this he knew that one of the birds was absent from its post. So he summoned the eagle, and bade him call each of the birds by name, so to find which of them was missing. The eagle returned with the news that the peewit was absent. Solomon was greatly displeased at this, for the peewit was indispensable because it could detect water even in a desert or at the greatest depth. 'Ascend high into the air', he said to the eagle. 'Search carefully for the peewit, and bring him to me, in

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order that I may chastise him by plucking out all his feathers, and exposing him to the sun until the vermin of the earth eat him.'

The eagle soared so high into the empyrean that the earth appeared but a speck. He then poised himself on his wings, and looked in every direction for the peewit, whom at length he espied coming from the south. Dropping down towards him he made as if he would seize him in his talons. The peewit adjured him, by the name of Solomon, not to deal with him in anger. 'Dost thou dare to invoke the name of Solomon?' replied the eagle grimly. 'Thy mother shall mourn for thee!' 'Bring me to him', said the peewit, 'I know that he will pardon my absence when he knows where I have been, and what I have to report.'

The eagle then conducted him into the presence of Solomon, who was sitting on his throne, and his countenance was wrathful. When he beheld the peewit he called him, and the bird trembled all over, and drooped his wings in token of submission. Solomon looked upon him with anger, but the Peewit cried, 'Remember, O Prophet of God, that thou also must give account to God; do not judge me until thou hast heard what I have to say.'

'How canst thou justify thy absence when I had not bidden thee go?'

'I bring thee news of a country and of a queen of whom thou hast never even heard; I mean the land of Saba, and Balkis its queen.'

The king said, 'I know naught of them. What hast thou heard and who has told thee of them?'

'Behold, I met one day with a peewit of that country, and I spoke to him of thy greatness and power. He was astonished, and said that thy name had never reached the kingdom of Saba. He desired me to accompany him to his home, in order that I might know that all that he had told me was true. And on the way he related to me the marvellous history of his country down to the reign of the queen; she commands an army whose numbers require twelve thousand generals to lead them.'

Thereupon Solomon set the peewit at liberty, and bade

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him relate what he had learned of the kingdom of Saba. It will be sufficient to say that it lay in the south of Arabia, and was founded by a king named Saba, son of Iaschhub. He had several successors, the last of whom, Scharabhil by name, was a lascivious tyrant. This man had a Vizier who possessed extraordinary personal beauty. A daughter of a Jinn fell in love with him, married him, and the fruit of the union was Balkis, who was also remarkable for her beauty. Scharabhil saw her by chance, became violently enamoured of her, and insisted on marrying her; but on the bridal night she stabbed him with a dagger, and thus became sole ruler and queen of the kingdom of Saba.

When the bird had ended Solomon said, 'Now we shall see if thou speakest truth or art a liar.' So he wrote the following letter to the queen:

'Solomon, son of David, and servant of God, to Balkis, Queen of Saba.

'In the name of God, the Most Merciful, salvation be to him who walketh in His ways! Accomplish immediately what I command thee, and acknowledge my power.'

He sealed the letter with his ring, gave it to the peewit, and said, 'Carry this letter to Balkis the Queen, and return as soon as thou knowest what counsel she takes with her ministers upon the matter.'

The peewit took the letter in his beak, and flying with the swiftness of an arrow arrived at Saba on the following day. The queen sat upon her throne, surrounded by her counsellors, when the messenger presented himself before her, and delivered the letter. When she had opened and read it she was greatly moved, and immediately made its contents known to her counsellors and the chiefs of her army; and prayed for their advice. They answered her with one accord, 'Thou canst count upon our courage and fidelity; do as seemeth best to thee.' The queen said: 'Before I strive with Solomon, lest he bring evil upon the land, this I will do. I will send rich gifts to the king, for if he receive them, he is not greater than other kings; but if he refuse them, he is a prophet of God, and whatsoever he commandeth us we will do.'

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Then the queen took five hundred young men, and put women's clothes on them, and gave men's clothes to as many maidens, and commanded that in this guise they should present themselves before Solomon. She sent also a thousand carpets of gold or silver thread, a crown thickly set with pearls and precious stones, and large quantities of amber, musk, aloes, and other products of Arabia. To these she added a closed box in which she placed a pearl, a diamond bored in a zigzag manner, and a crystal goblet. Then she wrote to Solomon :

'If thou art indeed a prophet thou canst discover the young men and the maidens, and say what is in the box, and what should be done with its contents.' She then entrusted the letter and the presents to the chief men of Saba, and said to them as they were departing, 'If Solomon receives you arrogantly do not fear, for that is weakness ; but if he receives you graciously be on your guard, for you deal with a prophet.'

The peewit heard all these words, for he had remained beside the queen until the envoys had departed. Then he flew without resting until he reached Solomon, in whose ear he told all that had occurred.

Then the king commanded the Jinns to weave a carpet nine parasangs in length, and to stretch it from the steps of the throne towards the south. On the eastern side of this he had a wall of gold erected, and on the west a wall of silver. He then commanded the animals, the demons, and the Jinns to range themselves on either side of the carpet. When the messengers at length came to the king's palace they were astonished above measure to find such magnificence and glory as they had never dreamt of. When they set their feet on the carpet, the further end of which they could not see, they were minded to cast away the presents they had brought. The further they advanced along the carpet the more their astonishment increased at the sight of the birds and the animals, the Jinns and the demons, between whose ranks they moved to reach the presence of the king. He received them graciously, and asked what they had brought.

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The most eloquent of the envoys replied that he bore a letter from Queen Balkis. 'Before it is opened I know what is therein', answered Solomon. 'Also I know what is in the closed box. It contains a pearl which needs to be pierced, a diamond which must be threaded through a zig-zag boring, and a goblet to be filled with water which has come neither from heaven nor earth.'

Then he had a thousand silver basins brought, and filled with water, and commanded the disguised youths and maidens to wash their faces. The boys rubbed their faces only with the hand on which the water had been poured, while the girls washed their faces with both hands. Thus he distinguished them. But, according to another tradition, he had a quantity of fruit brought. The males took it in their bare hands, the females in their gloved hands.

The other tests remained. Solomon ordered a heavy slave to mount a fiery young horse, and to gallop it about at full speed. When it returned streams of sweat were pouring down its flanks, so that in a moment the goblet was filled. 'This', the king said, 'is the water that comes neither from heaven nor earth.' To pierce the pearl he made use of the worm Shamir. The diamond bored in a zigzag troubled him a little, for no thread could be passed through it. But at last a demon brought him a small worm, which crept through the winding passage, drawing a silken thread behind it. In gratitude for this Solomon asked the worm what reward it desired. It prayed for a suitable tree on which it might live, and from which it might draw nourishment. So he placed it on the mulberry-tree, and this is the origin of the silkworm.

Then the king said to the messengers of Balkis, 'Ye have seen that I have answered the riddles that have been presented to me. Return to your mistress, bear back these presents, and say to her that if she does not bow down to me I will come upon her country with an army which no human might can overcome, and that I will lead her into miserable captivity, and so bring her to Jerusalem.'

The messengers returned home, satisfied as to the power and dignity of the Prophet Solomon. When they had

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related all that had chanced, Balkis determined to go to him. But before she set out she locked her throne in a hall which could not be reached except by first passing through six other locked halls; and the keys of these she gave into the care of the most faithful of her servants. Then she set out, and there went with her twelve thousand generals and all the soldiers who obeyed them.

And when she was but a parasang away from Jerusalem King Solomon said to his servants, 'Which of you will bring me the throne of the Queen of Saba, and set it here before she arrives?'

Then a Jinn of hideous appearance, as large as a mountain, opened his mouth, and said, 'By the power that I possess I will fetch it to thee by noon.' Now already there was seen far off a cloud of dust which rose from the approach of the queen. Thereupon Asaph, the son of Berachiah, said to Solomon, 'O King, lift up thine eyes towards heaven, and before thou canst lower them to earth again the throne of the Queen of Saba shall be before thee.' Solomon did as Asaph had said, and Asaph, by the power of the Most Holy Name, brought the throne, which rolled through the bowels of the earth in the twinkling of an eye, and came forth at Solomon's feet. The king was astonished at it, and said to his servants, 'Change the throne thus and thus, that I may see if the queen will know it.' So his servants changed portions of the throne and made alterations in its ornaments. When the queen appeared before Solomon, he asked her if she knew the throne. Then she looked at it and considered it, and said, 'It is mine, if it is what it was.' By this cunning answer Solomon perceived the prudence of the queen.[2]

Now as the Queen of Saba was drawing nigh to Jerusalem she came to the trees which Solomon had thrown across the brook Kedron, as we have already related. She asked what was the name of this bridge, and was told that it was called 'The three *accursed* trees'. But as if she had not heard aright, she said, 'The three *blessed* trees?' Three times she was told the name of the bridge, and three times she answered in this manner. When she met with Solomon

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she acquainted him with the nature of these trees, and the purpose for which they were intended, which was to serve as crosses for Christ and the two thieves. Thereupon Solomon had them taken up, and cleaned, and preserved in one of the treasure-chambers of the Temple.[3]

It is written that what chiefly influenced the Queen of Saba to come to Solomon was *to prove him with hard questions* (1 Kings x. 1). Tradition has preserved certain of these questions.

She brought before him a number of men, some circumcised, others uncircumcised, and asked him to distinguish between them. The king made a sign to the high priest, who opened the Ark of the Covenant; whereupon those that were circumcised bowed their bodies to half their height, while their countenances were illuminated with the glory of the Shechinah, but the uncircumcised fell prone on their faces. 'Those are circumcised,' he said, 'but these are not circumcised.'

She next ordered the sawn trunk of a cedar tree to be brought, and desired him to show her at which end the root had been, and at which end the branches. He had it cast into the water, whereupon one end sank a little, and the other floated on the surface. That part which sank was the root, while the other which remained uppermost was that from which the branches had sprung.

Then she placed before him two wreaths of flowers, one natural, the other wonderfully constructed of artificial blooms, and asked him to distinguish between them, without touching or smelling them. He had them placed in an open window, whereupon a swarm of bees entered, and fixed upon the natural flowers.

Then the queen endeavoured to confound him with riddles. She asked him: 'How does the sphere of heaven move, to the right or to the left?'

He answered: 'The circle of the firmament moves eastward to the right, and goes southward towards the west, thence coming back, northward, to the same place: and thus, moving rapidly by command, in a day and a night completes one revolution.'

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She asked: 'Before the existence of all creatures where did the Creator dwell? And after the destruction of all where shall He dwell who is immutable?'

'Before the existence of beings the Creator dwelt in Himself. And when created beings shall be no more, He shall dwell in His immutability.'

She asked: 'What land is that which hath but once seen the sun?'

'The land upon which after the Creation the waters were gathered, and the bed of the sea on the day when the waters were divided.'

She asked: 'The plant encircled itself with a diadem, but not by nature; and rays with flame were fixed on it; and it wore a crown of glory for its unworthy sons?'

'God appeared to Moses in a burning bush.'

She asked: 'What was that which was never born, yet life was given to it?'

'The golden calf.' (This refers to the Jewish legend that the Devil entered into it, whereupon it ran about and bellowed.)

She asked: 'The dead lived, the grave moves, the dead pray?'

'Jonah, who prayed in the whale's belly.'

She asked: 'What is that which as an oracle (or a storm) goes at the head of all, cries loudly and bitterly with its head bowed down like a rush, is a cause of praise to the free, of shame to the poor, of honour to the dead, of disgrace to the living, of joy to the birds, and of grief to the fish?'

'Flax woven into cloth, which makes a sail for a ship, linen for men's apparel, rags for the poor, shrouds for the dead; the birds eat the seeds, and the fish hate the nets which are made from it.'

At this she cried: 'We were told concerning thy wisdom, but we did not know that thou seest the secret thoughts!'[4]

Now the king was enamoured of Balkis, and desired that she should love him. From a Coptic story (unfortunately very fragmentary, but which can be reconstructed to a certain degree) it would appear that he made use of his

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ring as a charm to make her love him and submit herself to him. He took it off his finger, placed it in a goblet of wine, and then proffered her the latter. She said, 'If I drink this goblet of wine which is in thine hand I will humble myself before thee.' [Here there is a blank.] Then she said to him, 'There is in my land a pillar which will be useful to thee; all earthly wisdom is engraved on it, and the movements of the sun and moon.' So he summoned all the spirits over which he held sway, and asked them, 'Which of you will journey to the land of Saba, and fetch that pillar in the shortest space of time?' One spirit said, 'I will have it here by evening.' Another said, 'I will bring it immediately.' But a third declared, 'Before thou canst inhale and exhale one breath I will have it fetched.' So Solomon bade him fetch it; and while the word of command was still in the king's mouth the spirit departed and returned with the pillar on its wing.[5]

Thereupon Solomon determined to marry Balkis, or, as one writer puts it, to 'string this royal pearl of the diadem of sovereignty upon the thread of matrimony'. But his other wives became jealous at this, and in order to disgust Solomon spread the report that her legs were extremely hairy. When the king heard this he desired to know the truth of the report, and ordered the Jinns to build a palace with a glass floor on the surface of the water, so that it would appear as if it were all water. He then called Balkis to him, but when she reached the edge of the floor, imagining it to be all water, she lifted her garments and bared her legs, and their hairiness became known. But, with the aid of the demons, Solomon discovered a cure for this; and the place where this chanced is still pointed out in Jerusalem. It was a few yards within the gate Bab-el-Asbat, where down to recent times there stood the ruins of an old Saracenic bath-house.

But, according to another account, the Jinns spread the false report that Balkis had the feet of an ass. This they did, because they knew she was the daughter of a Jinn; and they feared that Solomon would marry her, and have children who, on account of the Jinn blood that would be

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in them, would be even more powerful and cunning than their father, and would keep the race of Jinns in still greater slavery. But when he knew this to be untrue Solomon married her.[6]

The king caused a throne of gold to be made for Balkis, around which were four lions, invented by the knowledge of those who excelled in talismanic arts. The lions were near the supports of the throne, but inside, and vomited fire from their mouths. On the back of each lion two vultures were perched, whose eyes were of rubies and teeth of pearls. Whenever Solomon ascended this throne, and sat on it with Balkis, two eagles sprayed rose-water on them, according to their requirements. On the two upper extremities of this couch a pair of birds were stationed, which so spread their wings around the throne that whenever Solomon desired with Balkis to be seen of no one, they were completely screened by them.[7]

Afterwards Balkis returned to her own land, where Solomon used to go and visit her each month. When at length she died he had her buried in the town of Tadmor. Her tomb remained unknown until the days of the Khalif Walid, when the walls of the city fell down as the result of prolonged rains. Then there was laid bare a tomb of stones, sixty ells long, and forty broad, on which was engraved this inscription:

'This is the tomb of Balkis the devout, Queen of Saba, and wife of Solomon. She was converted to the True Faith in the thirteenth year of the reign of Solomon, married him in the fourteenth year, and died in the twenty-third year of his reign.'

The son of the Khalif had the lid of the tomb raised, and discovered the body of a woman which was as fresh as the day it was buried. He announced this fact to his father, who directed that the tomb should be undisturbed, and covered over with great blocks of marble in order to conceal it effectually. And so, despite the various earthquakes to which the town of Tadmor has been subject, no man has since that day found any trace of the tomb of the Queen of Saba.[8]

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Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

II

We now turn to another series of legends respecting the Queen of Sheba, in which a deliberate tendency is exhibited. The modern Abyssinians hold the tradition that their Emperor, Menelik, is lineally descended from the son which the Queen of Sheba bore to King Solomon. This is the tale of how Abyssinia came to be ruled by a Davidic dynasty, and how the Ark of the Covenant was transferred from Jerusalem to that country.

When Solomon desired to build the Temple at Jerusalem, after the death of his father David, he ordered the workmen to cut out huge stones from the quarry for that purpose. But they found themselves unable to do this, for their tools broke before they could cut a single block. This they told to Solomon, who prayed to God for guidance, and his prayer was answered. Then he ordered his huntsmen to go and fetch him the young of that gigantic bird the Rokh. When this was obtained he directed that an immense cauldron of copper should be made, capable of containing the bird, and he had the young Rokh placed in the middle of the courtyard of the palace, and the cauldron overturned upon it in such a manner as to leave visible only its two wings. In the meantime the mother-bird had returned to her nest in the summit of the highest mountains, but, missing her offspring, began to fly here and there over the surface of the earth in search of it. At length, as she hovered over Jerusalem, she beheld the object of her quest; but being unable to release it, she flew to the east, to the Garden of Eden. There she found under a tree a piece of wood, which she carried back in her talons. She never ceased flying until she reached the palace. When she had arrived at the spot where her young lay imprisoned she dropped the piece of wood on the cauldron, which immediately split in two by the power of God; and the mother seized her little one, and flew away.

When Solomon and the Children of Israel beheld this, they glorified God who had given such understanding to dumb creatures. Solomon then ordered the workmen

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to take the wood, and to make use of it in cutting the stones. As soon as they placed it on the stones the latter split at once.

When the Temple was finished the piece of wood was carefully preserved in the interior of the palace. Although its peculiar properties were no longer manifest, yet none the less it was held in great esteem. But when God willed to transfer the sovereign line of Solomon to the land of Abyssinia, He ordered that its queen should come to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

In ancient times the land of Abyssinia was governed by the daughters of kings. Before this queen was born, of whom we write, her mother had a dream in which she beheld a pretty little goat. She said to herself, 'How pretty it is, and how dainty are its hoofs!' When her daughter was born one of her feet was shaped like a goat's hoof. Because of this deformity the young princess refused to take a husband, and so remained unmarried up to the time she became queen.

But on a day she determined with herself that she would journey to Solomon to hear his wise sayings. This had been fore-ordained of God, in order that He might preserve the House of David to the end of all things; for David himself had said under Divine Inspiration, *Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore* (Ps. cxxxii. 11, 12). But because the Children of Israel rebelled against God, He took from them the kingdom of David, and the prophetical, royal, and sacerdotal lines.

When the queen came to Jerusalem Solomon learnt that she had a goat's hoof, and desired to see it. Therefore he caused his throne to be set in the very middle of the palace courtyard, which he caused to be flooded by water from pipes. As the piece of wood lay always in the middle of the courtyard it was covered by the water. The queen at length arrived at the gate of the palace, mounted on a horse, and wished to make her way thus into the king's presence, but she was told that it was the House of God where none

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might enter on horseback. Then she dismounted, and two nobles brought her in. As she was about to dip her feet into the water she raised the end of her robe a little, and displayed her goat's hoof. But as she advanced through the water she struck it against the piece of wood, and at once its wonders were manifest, and the hoof was changed into a human foot. At first the queen was seized with fear, which soon turned into joy. She told Solomon that she had come from the uttermost ends of the earth to hear his wisdom, and added, 'As I came through the water to present myself before thy Greatness my goat's hoof struck against something hard, and immediately it was transformed.' So saying, she showed him her two feet. Then Solomon gave thanks to God, to whom alone the miracle should be ascribed, and told the queen that he had had the water laid on for the purpose of discovering her hoof. Then he ordered the water to be drawn off, and immediately the pavement of the courtyard was exposed, on which lay the piece of wood, whose story the king told to the queen; and when she had learnt of its wonderful power she ordered a collar of silver to be made, and placed upon it. King Solomon had a similar one made, and then directed that the wood should be placed on the altar in the Temple. When the king's successors came to prostrate themselves before the altar, and had learnt the history of the piece of wood, each one brought his offering of a collar of silver, so that by the time the Messiah came the wood was covered with thirty silver collars.

When the Saviour wished to accomplish His eternal purpose, and to save Adam and his descendants from the talons of the Evil One, it was divinely ordained that Judas, the chief priests, and the people of the Jews should conspire together to put Him to death. The chief priests covenanted with Judas to give him the thirty collars of silver if he would betray the Messiah to them. On the Friday morning, when they had condemned Him, they took the piece of wood, and ordered the carpenter to fashion it into a cross, on which they crucified Him. Thus on this piece of wood, which was brought from Paradise to be an object of venera-

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tion and adoration for kings, was the King of kings nailed. As for the thirty collars, Judas gave them back to the Jews, and then went and hanged himself.

Now when the Queen of Ethiopia and her soldiers were installed in Solomon's palace she was accustomed to go every day to hear his wisdom. And he pressed her to marry him, but she refused, saying, 'Unwedded I came from my own land, and unwedded I desire to return thither.' Solomon replied, 'Be my wife! but, until thou comest to me of thine own accord I will not urge thee more.' To this she consented, determining that she would never come to him of her own free will, and hoping that in this way she might remain unwedded. The king said no more upon the matter, and so she thought that it had passed from his mind.

But Solomon had not forgotten. He ordered his cooks to prepare bakemeats for the queen, and in them to mingle certain ingredients. When she had eaten of them she demanded cold water, and drank copiously and frequently, without being able to quench her thirst. The third night after this he ordered that no one should give her water, on pain of death; nor should any be left anywhere, except in the king's apartment. At midnight the queen was seized with a consuming thirst; she sought for water, but none was procurable. She demanded it from her attendants, but none durst give it to her; she searched the palace, but could find none. At last it was told her that water was to be had in the king's apartment. She returned to her couch, but her thirst compelled her to rise again and seek the king's chamber, where Solomon seemed to be wrapped in slumber. There she beheld a vessel of water, and drank of it, but as she was preparing to depart the king sprang up and, seizing her by the hand, said, 'Thou hast come to me of thine own accord, and now thou must wed me, as thou hast promised.' So she consented.

A little while after, when she desired to return to her kingdom, she said, 'If I bear thee a child, what shall I do with it?' He replied, 'If it be a son, send him to me

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when he hath reached manhood, and I will give him the kingdom; but if it be a daughter, keep her thyself.' She asked, 'If I send the lad, how wilt thou know that it is indeed thy son?' He took a ring off his finger, and said, 'When thou sendest him place this ring upon his little finger. By this token I shall know him, and will give him the kingdom.' After this she took leave of him, and departed with her soldiers to her own land.

In due time she bore a son, the delight of her heart, to whom she gave the name of David. She obtained for him the best teachers and instructors, so that in time he became as intelligent as his father. When he was a man, he asked his mother one day, 'Who is my father? Did he die while I was still but a child?' The queen said: 'Not so, my son. He is living, he is not dead. His name is Solomon, the son of David, a Prophet of God, and King of Israel. His kingdom is at Jerusalem. Behold this ring! By virtue of it thy father will make thee King of Abyssinia, as is the will of God. Arise, take with thee presents, and make thy way to Jerusalem, where thou shalt see thy father, his kingdom, his wisdom, and his glory, and where he will make thee king according to his word.'

Not many days after, as soon as they had gathered together gifts worthy of a king, his mother put the ring on the little finger of his right hand, and caused him to set out. When he drew near Jerusalem Solomon heard that a king was approaching, and commanded his officers to go and meet him; nor did he know him for his son, even when the young man came to the gate of the palace. There the lad, finding his father's horse caparisoned, leapt upon it, holding his sword unsheathed. This was told to Solomon, who did not hide his anger. But when they met face to face, the youth said, 'The possessor of this ring hath given me a kingdom, even from my birth.' When Solomon saw the ring he was seized with great joy, and rising from his throne embraced him, crying, 'Welcome, my beloved son!' He girt his brow with the crown of David, made him sit on his throne, caused the musicians to play in his honour, and commanded the soldiers to cry, 'This is David, son of

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Solomon, son of David, son of Jesse, King of Israel!' All men heard that Prince David, son of the Queen of Sheba, had arrived at his father's palace, and that he had had given to him his crown and kingdom.

Now in the Temple of the Lord which Solomon had built and dedicated was the Ark of the Covenant, covered with plates of gold, and enveloped in silk. By it a wonder was shown on occasions to the Children of Israel. When the priests had finished their service, and the people were at prayer to the Supreme God, the Ark was elevated a little above the ground. This was a sign to them that their prayer was heard favourably. But if, on the other hand, the Ark remained motionless, the people knew that they had committed some sin; and they prayed more fervently to God until He had pity on them, and vouchsafed them the sign desired. One day the young prince entered the Temple to pray, and saw this great marvel. As soon as he had beheld it he resolved to take the Ark with him to his own land. Accordingly he presented himself one night before his father, and said, 'I desire to carry the Ark with me to Abyssinia.' 'Put this thought from thee, my son,' replied Solomon, 'for none may bear it except the priests alone, and if any impious man touch it he dieth forthwith. Know that the Children of Israel receive their sole protection from the virtue that is in the Ark.' The young man answered, 'I desire neither gold nor silver. I only ask that this Ark may guard me on my journey, and afford protection to the soldiers in my kingdom.' 'If God will that thou take it, He will provide the means,' answered Solomon. 'But speak not to me of it. Thou shouldst indeed depart without taking leave of me, for the priests will assuredly put me on oath with respect to the matter, and I would not forswear myself.'

Then the young prince had skilful workmen secretly brought to him, whom he caused to make an Ark which could not be distinguished from the real one. When they had finished he caused them to be slain, and had others brought, who should apply the plates of gold to its exterior. These men also he had put to death. Finally he covered

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the mock ark with a sheet of silk. When he was on the point of departing he said nothing to his father, but had four priests brought to him under pretence of demanding their prayers; he was so familiar with them during the last days that he spent in Jerusalem that they never quitted his side.

On the night on which David intended to depart the priests came to take leave of him. They were brought into an apartment, where they were seized, and loaded with chains. After this his friends, armed with drawn swords, went with him and the manacled priests to the Temple, where he entered, and commanded the four priests to take up the true Ark, and leave the other in its place. He then went out, full of joy at having the Ark, which the priests bore; and left Jerusalem without bidding farewell to his father. It was indeed the will of God that the Ark should be preserved in that land where the kingdom of David was to endure till the end of the world.

On the morrow the priests and the people of Israel went to the Temple to pray, as their custom was. When they had prostrated themselves, and prayed to God, the Ark gave no sign, so they said among themselves that some one must have sinned. They continued to pray for three days, and sought to discover the wrong-doer in their midst. At the end of this time the priests approached the Ark, but recoiled with cries of horror when they discovered that it was not the true Ark. They felt assured that Prince David had taken it; they counted the priests, and found that four were missing. Angry at the loss of the sacred Ark the Elders of Israel went to Solomon, and questioned him. 'Hast thou ordered thy son to take away the Ark of the Covenant?' At these words the king wept, feigning great distress, and swore that he had not directed him to do so, and that he had not even known at what hour his son had departed. They said then, 'Since thou hast not consented to such a deed, make ready a band of soldiers, that we may overtake him, and bring back the Ark to its place in the Temple of the Lord.' He provided them with soldiers fully equipped, and they set out in pursuit of the prince, and

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journeyed for forty days. On the forty-first day they met with certain merchantmen, whom they questioned about the Ark and its conductors. They replied, 'We have seen a great king, surrounded by a mighty host of soldiers, who marched with the Ark as fast as the wind drives the clouds across the sky.' They added that these were marching as far in one day as an ordinary army would in forty days. Those who were pursuing the prince then knew that their quest was in vain, and returned sorrowfully to Jerusalem.

When the young prince arrived home his mother gave up the kingdom to him. Thus he was established king on the throne of David, and from that time the kingdom of Ethiopia has been considered to be the residence of the descendants of David, and to have the right of possessing for ever the Ark of the Covenant.

After the Ascension of the Messiah His disciples preached in His name in different parts of the world. St. Philip the Deacon met the Ethiopian eunuch, and baptized him, as is recorded. When the latter returned to Ethiopia he preached the Messiah, and converted many. Then St. Mark, one of the Seventy, baptized the people, ordained deacons and priests, and decreed that their Metropolitan should be of the diocese of Mark the Evangelist. From that time the Faith has been firmly established in the land of Abyssinia, the kingdom has been preserved for the descendants of David, and will be until the consummation of all things.[9]

A shorter and more modern form of the tradition may now be given, which differs in many respects from the foregoing.

In ancient days the people of Tigrē in Abyssinia used to worship a dragon, and this was the sacrifice they would bring him: each man among them gave him in turn his first-born daughter, and a measure of mead and a measure of milk. A certain man had a first-born daughter named Etiyē-Azēb, and when it came to his turn to offer her he tied her in a tree for the dragon to eat. Now seven saints came to this tree, and seated themselves in the shade of it. And while they were resting there she began to weep, and

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one of her tears fell upon them. At this they looked up, and seeing her tied there, asked in astonishment, 'Who art thou? Art thou an angel, or a human being?' And she answered them, 'I am a human being.' They said to her, 'And why art thou bound here?' She answered, 'They have bound me in order that the dragon may devour me.' They asked her, 'Is he on this side of the hill, or on that?' She said, 'He is on that hill yonder.' And when they saw him they were affrighted, but one of them plucked up courage, and ran and smote him; whereupon they all attacked him with the cross, and slew him. But some of its blood trickled on to her heel, and forthwith it became an ass's heel. The saints set her free, and bade her return to her village. She did so, but the people of the village, not knowing that the dragon was killed, drove her away. Outside the village she climbed a tree, and remained there over night. The next day she went back to the people, and said, 'Come, and let me show you that the dragon is dead.' So they followed her, and saw that it was dead indeed. Then they said, 'Let us make her our chief. For if God had not given this to her how could the dragon have met his death through her?' After she was appointed chief she made another girl her minister.

After this she heard that in Jerusalem was a king named Solomon, who was able to cure all diseases. So, desiring to have her foot restored, she and her minister braided their hair so that they resembled men, girt swords at their sides, and departed for Jerusalem. When they drew near that town it was reported to Solomon that the King of Abyssinia approached. So he said, 'Bid him enter!' The moment that her foot touched the threshold it became as it had been. He welcomed them, grasping their hands in greeting, and ordered food and drink to be prepared. But the strangers out of shyness ate and drank moderately. So he suspected that they were women.

He ordered a bed to be made for them in his own apartment. And he took a skin full of honey, and he put a bowl under it; also he made a hole in the skin, so that the honey might trickle out. Now it was his custom when he was

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asleep to keep his eyes half open; and when he was awake, to close them. The women watched him, and seeing him asleep with his eyes half open, they deemed him to be awake, and said to each other, 'When will he fall asleep?' As they whispered he awoke, and closed his eyes. 'Now he hath fallen asleep!' they said; and forthwith they arose, and began to lick the honey from the bowl. So he knew them to be women.

He married them both, and when they desired to return home he gave each of them a staff of silver and a ring, saying unto them, 'If it is a girl, let her take the staff of silver, and come to me; and if it is a boy, let him take this ring, and come to me.' And the Queen of the South bought a mirror. In due course each of them bore a son. When the boys were grown up, the Tigrē people said, 'They are fatherless children.' And they questioned their mothers with respect to what had been said; but their mothers answered, 'Your father is King Solomon; he dwells in Jerusalem.' Now the son of the Queen of the South resembled his father perfectly, even in his colour he was like King Solomon; and his mother had given to him the name of Menelik. And she said to him, 'My son, thy father resembles thee. Take this mirror, and make good use of it, for thy father is very shrewd, he will hide himself from thee. And if thou seest a man sitting on the throne, do not greet him (for perchance he may not be the king, but another).'

Then the two lads departed for Jerusalem. And when they arrived, King Solomon said, 'If they are my sons, let them wait!' So he did not show himself to them for three years. After the expiration of that time he bade them be admitted; but he had taken off his royal garments, and clothed himself in rags. On the throne he had seated one of his own people, while he himself had gone into the stable. And when they entered, the other boy went and grasped the hand of the man who was sitting on the throne. But Menelik stood, and looked at himself in the mirror. He perceived that the colour of the man on the throne was not like his. Then he looked all round, but could see no one whose colour resembled his. After a while Solomon

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looked out from the stable; Menelik at once went to him, and greeted him. Solomon said, 'Thou art my true son; the other also is my son, but he is a fool!'

Menelik listened to his father delivering judgement. He heard him say on one occasion, 'If cattle trespass upon another man's field let the proprietor of the field take the cattle for his own.' But Menelik said, 'Not so, my father! Let the proprietor of the field rather take six measures of grain for the trespass.' Thus he showed himself wiser than his father. But the people of Jerusalem, when they heard this, said to Solomon, 'How can two chiefs reign over us? Send this thy son back to his own land!' The king said, 'Let me take counsel, and then I will answer you.' So he told the matter to Menelik, who said, 'Speak thus to them, "Is he not my first-born son? Will ye send your own first-born sons with him?"' And when this was told to them they agreed, each of them, to send their first-born sons with him.

And as Menelik was about to depart Solomon said to him, 'Take the Ark of Michael with thee!' But he took the Ark of Mary; and the cover of Mary's Ark he put on Michael's Ark, and that of Michael's Ark he put on Mary's. And taking the Ark, he went away. After a few days a storm arose in Jerusalem, and Solomon said, 'Go, find Mary's Ark.' It appeared to be there, but when they took off the cover they found it was Michael's Ark. So he sent a message to his son, saying, 'Send back the Ark!' but he refused to do so. As he was carrying away the Ark a certain deacon who was bearing it died, and was buried. And when they had done this, they attempted to go on, but the Ark could not be moved, because the deacon had not been properly buried by being placed in a coffin. When they had done this, the Ark still refused to be moved, because one of his fingers was sticking out of the coffin. When they had put it inside the Ark moved on. They brought it to Axum, where Satan was building a house to fight against God. But at their approach he destroyed it, and went away. With the stones he was using they built a church at Axum, in the sanctuary of which they placed the Ark, and there it has remained to the present day.[10]

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Reference-Notes

1. Cassel, pp. 275 ff.
2. Migne, ii, cols. 859–66.
3. Schischmanoff, *Légendes religieuses bulgares*, p. 70; Hanauer, *Folklore of Holy Land*, p. 38.
4. The riddles will be found in *Folklore*, i, p. 354; Cassel, p. 283; Issaverdens, p. 140. See W. Hertz, *Die Rätsel der Königin von Saba* (*Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, 1905, p. 413), which I have not been able to consult.
5. *Abhandl. der Königl. Preuss. Akad. der Wiss.* (1897), pp. 24–6.
6. Migne, ii, col. 867; Frazer, *Folklore in O. T.*, ii, p. 568; Mirkhond, p. 91; Tabari, p. 441.
7. Mirkhond, p. 92.
8. Migne, ii, col. 869.
9. Amélineau, *Contes et Romans de l'Égypte chrétienne*, i, p. 144. A much longer, and somewhat different, version is in the Ethiopic *Kebra Nagast*. This has been translated into German by Bezold in *Abhandl. der Königl. Bayer. Akad. der Wiss.* (1905), xxxiii; and into English by Sir E. A. W. Budge with the title 'The Queen of Sheba and her only son Menyelek' (Medici Society). Nebuchadnezzar was said to have been a son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, iv, p. 300).
10. Littmann, 'The Legend of the Queen of Sheba in the Tradition of Axum' (*Bibliotheca Abessinica*, i). In an Algerian folktale a drop of ghoul's blood falls on a king's feet, and turns them into those of a ghoul (Desparmet, *Contes populaires sur les Ogres*, i, p. 81). For an account of the Solomonic dynasty in Abyssinia see Rey, *Unconquered Abyssinia* (London 1923), pp. 81 ff.

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IX

THE DAUGHTER OF PHARAOH

And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the City of David (1 Kings iii. 1). Of this marriage, and of its results, there is much related in the Ethiopic life of Solomon, the *Kebra Nagast.*

After the loss of the Ark, which had been taken away by his son, Solomon lived eleven years. During these years his heart turned from the love of God, and he unlearned his wisdom through his love for strange women. He loved passionately the daughter of the King of Egypt, Magsara by name, and brought her into the house which he had made, on the ceiling of which he had painted pictures of the sun, moon, and stars, which gave light by day as well as by night. Its balconies were of brass, its roof of silver, its walls of precious stones, and its floors were paved with sapphire and onyx. He took up his abode here for love of the house and of Magsara.

But she had idols which her father had given her to worship; and because Solomon saw her praying to the idols, and making sacrifice to them without reprimanding or leaving her, the Lord was angry, and caused him to forget his wisdom. But she, according to the folly of the Egyptians, continued worshipping her idols, and held orgies in which all the servants of her household joined. And because they delighted in these orgies the Children of Israel prayed also with the daughter of Pharaoh, and joined in the idolatry. Even Solomon himself found pleasure in the orgies, and paid heed to the foolish ritual.

Now when Magsara saw that Solomon hearkened, and seemed not to mind but rather to like these religious ceremonies, and to be curious concerning them, she exercised her fascinations upon him, and spoke to him in a soft,

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sweet voice, with all the wiles of a woman. By these things she sought to turn Solomon's heart from goodness to things that were unlawful.

She said to him, 'It is good to worship the gods which my father and all the kings of Egypt have worshipped.' Whereupon he answered her, 'Dost thou call that "gods" which hath been made by the hands of men, the work of the goldsmiths, carpenters, painters, sculptors, and stone-masons? They are no gods, but the work of men, in gold, silver, brass, lead, clay, and stone. But we, for our part, worship only the Holy God of Israel, and our mistress, the holy heavenly Zion [the Ark of the Covenant].'

Then she answered and said to him. 'Thy mistress Zion hath been taken away by thy son, born of a strange people from which God hath forbidden thee to take a wife; for they are a black people' [this refers to the taking away of the Ark by the son of the Queen of Sheba].

The king said: 'Thou sayest these things, forgetting that thou thyself art one of a race from whom God hath commanded us to be separated. Thy root and stump is the root of Ham; ye are children of Ham. As concerning the Ark, that has happened as God willed; He hath given her to be reverenced. But I will sacrifice to none of thy gods, nor worship them, as thou wouldst have me do.'

Thus she argued with him, beguiling him day and night, while he continually resisted her. One day she decked herself out in costly clothing, and perfumed herself; but carried herself proudly towards him. He said to her, 'What shall I do, for thy aspect towards me is not as it was formerly?' But she was silent, and made him no answer. Then he said, 'What shall I do to please thee? Tell me what thou desirest, and I will do it, so that I may enjoy thy countenance as heretofore.' Thereupon she spake and said, 'Swear to me by the God of Israel that thou wilt not break thy word to me.'

And he swore that he would do what she desired of him. So she fastened a rope across the middle of the door of the house of her gods, and brought three locusts and placed them in the temple of her idols. Then she said, 'Come

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to me without breaking the thread as thou stoopest beneath it. Kill these three locusts in my presence by wringing their necks.' Thus she made him bow before her idols, and do sacrifice to them. And he did as she had commanded. Then she said to him, 'From henceforth I will do thy will, since thou hast sacrificed to my gods, and worshipped them.' Now he had done this because of his oath, although he knew it was a sin to enter into the temple of her idolatry.[1]

According to the Jews the marriage of Solomon with a heathen princess was the chief cause of all the evils that befell, not merely the king, but the Jewish nation itself. On the very night of the marriage the angel Gabriel descended from heaven, and stuck a reed into the sea. Little by little the mud and sand gathered around it, until a sandbank was formed. This continually grew larger and larger, until at length it became firm enough for human habitation. Men settled upon it, and there subsequently was built Rome, the city which was destined to bring woe and tribulation to the Jewish people.

Pharaoh's daughter was the first of Solomon's wives to lead him into the worship of false gods, for when she came to him she brought with her a thousand musical instruments. Each of these was used in the service of a separate idol, which she described to him by name, but he did not protest against it.

It is said that Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter took place on the very night on which the building of the Temple was completed. Now during the seven years spent in its construction the king had drunk no wine; but on the night of its completion he drank deeply, and celebrated his wedding with so much merriment and festivity that the sound of the drunken revelry ascended to heaven, mingled with the psalms and hymns which the people were singing in their joy at the completion of the house; and God was wroth and thought at that time to destroy the Temple as well as the whole city of Jerusalem with its inhabitants. It would seem as if Pharaoh's daughter made every effort to draw Solomon away from the True Faith.

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For when they retired she hung over his head a canopy thickly studded with gems which shone like the stars. Each time he opened his eyes, and intended to rise, he espied these glittering gems, and composed himself to sleep again, believing that these were really stars, and that the night was not yet over. All this time the keys of the Temple lay under his pillow, so that the priests could not obtain entrance into the House of God, and waited for him to wake until it was too late to offer the morning sacrifice. At length in despair they went to the Queen-Mother, Bathsheba, who roused him when four hours of the day had flown. It is believed that on this occasion Bathsheba reprimanded him by uttering the words, *It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink and forget the law,* &c. (Prov. xxxi. 4–5).[2]

But it is written that besides the daughter of Pharaoh, *King Solomon loved many strange women, and when he was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods* (1 Kings xi. 1–4). An Armenian writer comments on that passage as follows.

'Solomon took unto himself many wives, even seven hundred; and was not satisfied with them, but addressed himself to the Gentiles, and took from the Canaanites three hundred impure concubines, daughters of their kings and their princes, who became a scandal to himself, and a contempt to the multitude of his wives, who were gathered together and came to him on account of his wonderful wisdom. For in spite of his wisdom he was deceived, and gave himself up to women who conspired together to lead his soul astray; so that he even set up idols upon the mountains, and publicly committed fornication over against the holy Temple, and before his enemies.' Of his dealings with these strange women, and of the folly into which they led him, many tales are told.[3]

It is said that King Solomon had a favourite wife, who had so captivated his heart that he yielded to her every caprice. One day she said to him, 'If thou lovest me, build me a palace which shall be constructed throughout

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of the bones of birds.' To please her, Solomon in his folly ordered the slaughter of birds great and small for the purpose of obtaining their bones. The sparrows, who are always a cunning race, alone escaped from destruction. It came into the mind of their king that he would go and remonstrate with Solomon, as the latter knew the language of birds. Accordingly he perched himself on the branch of a tree beside the royal palace, and cried, 'Come to the window, O Solomon, and hearken to me.' When Solomon had obeyed, the bird asked him:

'Which are the most numerous—men or women?'

The king said: 'Men, doubtless.'

'Thou art in error!' said the King of the Sparrows. 'For one must reckon in the number of women those men who are effeminate, or who possess a woman's brain. Thou art amongst these, in that thou art putting to death so many innocent birds to gratify a woman's whim.'

On hearing this Solomon stroked his beard, and then gave orders to his people to cease from the work. So the palace was never built.[4]

Solomon had married a pagan woman, the daughter of a pagan king. She detested him, and would not obey him. When Solomon went to the church she would not go with him; but one day he forced her to accompany him. Then she said: 'I will go to the church, but when I cross myself I will not pray, and when I pray I will not cross myself.'

They arrived at the church, but the pagan wife neither crossed herself nor prayed. When they had returned home again, she said to him: 'Now come into the temple of my gods.'

The king said, 'Be it so, but I will bear myself there as thou didst in mine!'

But the woman was full of diabolical cunning, and caused the door to be constructed in such a manner that it opened from bottom to top, instead of from side to side. They arrived at the heathen temple. The wife entered first; and as Solomon was standing on the threshold, about to enter, the door fell upon the nape of his neck so that

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he might be compelled to bow his head before the idols. But he suspected the trick, and turned back and did not enter.

One day this woman plotted to elope with a neighbouring king, who was also a heathen. Their plan was that the woman was to feign death, and when she was buried the king would disinter her, and they would escape together.

So the news came to Solomon that his wife was dead. He went to look at her, and muttered to himself: 'Worshipper of devils! Thou wilt not deceive me a second time. Thou art not dead.'

He took a red-hot bar of iron, and burnt her hands which were folded. But so obstinate was she that she did not utter a groan.

She was buried that evening, and scarcely was she placed in the earth than the pagan king came and carried her away.

The next day Solomon went to visit the woman's father, and said to him: 'Come with me, and let us see if thy daughter is in her tomb.'

'Dost thou fear God?' cried the father. 'Shall I go to disturb the remains of my dead child?'

But Solomon persuaded him. So they went to the tomb and caused it to be opened, and then smote their hands together in astonishment—the tomb was empty!

Then the king considered the matter, and because he suspected the true history, he summoned three bodies of soldiers, of whom one body was dressed in red, the second in white, and the third in black. He took with him three flutes, and made his way alone to the palace of the unbelieving king, whom he found in the act of drinking tea with his runaway wife. They welcomed him with ironical laughter, and offered him some tea, which he drank. Then the king arose, and went out, and ordered a gallows to be erected.

When he had returned he said to Solomon: 'Come out on the balcony with us.'

When they had come there, he pointed to the gallows, and asked: 'For whom is that built?'

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Solomon answered: 'For me or for thee, but thine is the likelier chance.'

The two burst out laughing at this, and the woman cried, 'Was it with such a fool as this that I should have spent my life? But now he is in our hands!'

As they were about to lead him to the gallows, Solomon begged that the king would allow him to play a little. When this was allowed, he played on one of the flutes, and immediately the army clad in white appeared.

In astonishment the king asked: 'What is this?'

And Solomon answered in irony: 'This is my death.'

When he had played on another flute the red army appeared. The king asked: 'What is this?'

And again Solomon answered in irony: 'This is my innocent blood which is poured out.'

When he had played on the third flute the black army appeared. The king asked: 'What is this?'

Solomon said: 'This is a host of devils who have come to take away thy soul. And although I am in thy own country yet surely I will have thee hanged.' And it was done before Solomon had made an end of speaking.

When the queen saw this she flung herself at the feet of Solomon, and begged for pardon. But he spurned her, and ordered his soldiers to fasten her by the hair to the tail of a wild horse, which dragged her along until she perished miserably.[5]

King Solomon became enamoured of a very beautiful married woman, and desired to take her into his harem. He sent many messengers to her to beg her to come to him, but she refused. But in the end he threatened to come and take her by force, and when she heard this, and knew that the king would do as he said, she sent a message to him to come to her house, but not until the middle of the night. And when he had come, she was awaiting him in a room on the second floor, and lowered to him a basket on the end of a rope, and said, 'O King, enter into the basket, and I will have thee drawn up, so that my husband, who sleeps beside the staircase, may not hear us.'

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The king entered the basket, and the woman then had him drawn up till he was mid-way between the window and the ground, and there stayed him. If he jumped out he was in danger of death, and he was unable to climb up the rope. Then he began to implore the woman to set him free. But she said, 'Solomon the Wise, thou art wise and yet not wise! Didst thou not think that I would play some trick on thee? Thou canst judge all manner of suits in law, but hast no judgement when the matter concerns thyself. Thou art so blinded with passion that thou didst enter the basket unsuspectingly. But tell me what I shall do? Shall I let thee fall, or shall I leave thee suspended in mid-air, a gazing-stock for all men great and small?'

The king said: 'Honest woman, I have done wrong, and thou hast done right! Lower me gently, so that no harm may come to me, and I will send thee a goodly gift, and I will leave thee alone. It hath been truly said, *What hath the wise man more than the fool?* (Eccles. vi. 8). I beseech thee, worthy woman, pardon me for having sinned toward thee. I have deserved my punishment. I swear to thee by my crown that I will never persecute thee more, but in future I will treat thee as if thou wert my sister.'

Hearing him swear by his crown the woman let him descend, and Solomon, full of shame, returned to his house.[6]

Solomon said on one occasion, 'By each of my thousand wives I will have a son, who will be able to fight in religious wars for the sake of God.' But he omitted to add the words, 'If it please God!' Accordingly only *one* son was born, and this child had but one eye, one ear, one hand, and one foot. When Solomon beheld it, he became melancholy and overwhelmed with grief. It is said that one day as he was sitting with Asaph, the mother, and the child, he uttered lamentations; but Asaph said, 'We must pray for the cure of this infant; perhaps the inscrutable Omnipotent One will grant our request.'

They approved of this, whereupon Solomon said, 'O God, Thou knowest that despite all my power and magnificence

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if a man comes to me with an apple as a present, and another with empty hands, I shall be more pleased with the former than with the latter.' Then he turned his face in the direction of prayer, and continued, 'My God, if Thou knowest that these words of mine are true, do not withhold the cure from this infant.' After he had ended his devotions the child received its other eye and ear.

Then Asaph said, 'O Lord, Thou knowest how often I have besought Solomon to relieve me of the office of being his prime minister, and that in this respect my heart agreed not with my tongue. If I have spoken the truth, deprive not this child of a glance of Thy mercy.' After Asaph had uttered these words the Lord bestowed the other hand upon the child.

Then the mother of the infant prayed, saying, 'O Lord, Thou knowest that although Solomon, with all his pomp and grandeur, is my spouse, I nevertheless wished any man whom I beheld to become my husband. If I speak truth in this, bestow health upon my son.' Then God gave him the other foot.

After the boy had thus obtained the perfection of all his limbs, Solomon loved him greatly, and sought to find out an affable and kind man to whom he might entrust this fruit of the garden of paradise. It is related in some traditions that the Jinns came to Solomon, and requested him to surrender the boy to them that they might take care of him; whereupon he granted their request. But his deed was not approved in Heaven, and the Angel of Death was ordered to snatch away the child's soul, and throw his dead body on the throne of Solomon. And this is supposed to be the incident referred to in the enigmatical passage in the Koran (Sura xxxviii), 'We placed a phantom [or counterfeit body] on his throne.' [7]

Solomon's love for women is considered by the Jews to have been the cause of his gradual downfall, and this they support by Scriptural quotations. At first, before he married alien wives, he reigned over those in heaven, as it is written, *Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord* (1 Chron. xxix. 23).

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Subsequently he reigned only over those below, as it is written, *And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms* (1 Kings iv. 21). Later still he reigned only over Israel, as it is written, *I the Preacher was king over Israel* (Eccles. i. 12). Then only over Jerusalem, as it is written, *The Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem* (Eccles. i. 1). At last he reigned only over his staff, as it is written, *And this was my portion of all my labour* (Eccles. ii. 10). This last refers to the period he spent in exile, of which we shall speak in the next chapter.[8]

REFERENCE-NOTES

1. *Kebra Nagast* (Bezold's German trans., p. 60). The incident of killing the locusts also occurs at the end of the *Testament of Solomon* (Migne, *P. G.*, cxxii, col. 1358).
2. Faerber, *König Salomon in der Tradition* (Teil i), pp. 49 ff.
3. Issaverdens, p. 139.
4. Tcheraz, *L'Orient inédit*, p. 19. See Meinhof, *Afrikanische Märchen*, p. 281.
5. *Revue des traditions populaires*, ii. 518. In this story Solomon remains sitting in a wheel-barrow. As the point of this is not clear I have omitted it. A story closely resembling the foregoing is given in Kemble, *Solomon and Saturn*, p. 17.
6. Schischmanoff, *Légendes religieuses bulgares*, p. 82.
7. Mirkhond, p. 93.
8. Hershon, *Genesis with a Talmudical Commentary*, p. 425.

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X

SOLOMON IN EXILE

In Ecclesiastes (i. 12) the following words are attributed to Solomon, *I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.* How is this to be understood? For Solomon dwelt secure and in peace, and, unlike his father David, was never driven from his throne, but sat continually upon it in Jerusalem all the days of his life. Why then does he use the word *was*? To explain this many versions of a tale are told both by Jews and Mohammedans, some of which we shall relate in this chapter.

A threefold prohibition had been laid down for the future king of Israel in Deut. xvii. 16, 17, *He shall not multiply* (lō yarbēh) *horses to himself: neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.* These three commands Solomon broke, in punishment for which he was driven into exile for three years; and it was the letter Yōd that accused him of wrongdoing, and so was instrumental in bringing this upon him.

It is written in Jer. ix. 23, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom.* These words refer to Solomon. For as he sat upon his throne one day, his heart was filled with pride and presumption, and he said to himself, 'No one is so wise as I. It is enacted that the king *shall not multiply* (lō yarbēh) *wives to himself, &c.*; but I will multiply (ārbeh) wives, and yet I will not decline from the right way.' By speaking thus he omitted the letter Yōd (y) in *yarbēh*; this letter is the smallest in the Hebrew alphabet, but withal the most important, as it is the first of the four which form the most sacred name of God. Then the letter Yōd flew up to Heaven, and standing before the throne of God, cried, 'Ruler of the world! Hast Thou in Thy law written so much as *one* letter to no purpose?' And the Holy One,

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blessed be He, answered, 'No!' Then said the letter Yōd, 'Lo! Solomon hath cancelled me! He hath taken to himself a thousand wives, and so hath trodden under foot Thy commands!' Then the Holy One replied to the wrathful letter, 'I will consider it, and will give to thee thy due!'

Thereafter God said unto Ashmedai, the king of the demons, 'Go to Solomon, take from him his signet-ring, assume his likeness and his appearance, and seat thyself upon his throne.' Solomon had enslaved Ashmedai, and bound him in chains, as we have related in a previous chapter. One day the two were conversing, when Solomon said to him, 'Wherein lies the greatness and the power of the Jinns, if thou, their mighty king, canst be bound and kept in bondage by a mere mortal?' 'Remove this chain from me,' replied Ashmedai, 'give me thy ring, and I will show thee in the twinkling of an eye wherein our superiority consists.' In a moment of divinely pre-ordained foolishness, Solomon did so. Hardly had he released him, and given him the ring, than Ashmedai towered up to a prodigious height, with one wing touching heaven and the other reaching to earth. Immediately he seized Solomon, and, swallowing him, spat him out again to a distance of four hundred miles; then, by virtue of the ring, he seated himself upon the throne, and all the people believed him to be Solomon.

Thus cast into exile the unfortunate Solomon cried, *What profit hath a man of all his labour wherein he laboureth under the sun?* (Eccles. i. 3). He wandered from door to door throughout all the cities and villages of Israel, saying continually, *I, Koheleth, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.* But his erstwhile subjects treated him with derision. They said one to another, 'What sort of fool is this? The king sits upon his throne, and this man says *I was king!*' Once an old woman, in contemptuous charity, placed a dish of ground beans before him, and beat him on the head with a stick. And in many other ways did they testify their scorn. But the lowest depths of despair were reached by him whenever he met with any one who recognized him. Once, in his wanderings, he encountered an acquaintance,

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SOLOMON SEIZED BY ASHMEDAI.

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a rich and well-considered man, who gave him a sumptuous banquet, but utterly spoiled it by continually speaking to Solomon during the meal of the splendour and magnificence which he himself had once beheld with his own eyes at the king's court. These ill-timed remarks moved the king to tears, and he wept so bitterly that when he rose from the banquet he was satiated, not with the rich food, but with salt tears. The following day it happened that Solomon met another acquaintance, this time a poor man, who entreated him to do him the honour of breaking bread under his roof. All that the poor man could offer his distinguished guest was a meagre dish of greens, but he tried in every way to assuage the grief that oppressed Solomon, telling him that although God was dealing severely with him, yet He would assuredly restore him to his kingdom in due time. These words of his poor host were more comforting to Solomon's bruised heart than the banquet which the rich man had prepared for him. And it was the contrast between these two episodes that drew forth from him the words, *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith* (Prov. xv. 17). This state of exile continued for the space of three years, and at the end of that period the Holy One said, 'Enough! I have given Yōd that which was due to him.'

During these three years Ashmedai sat on the throne in the semblance of King Solomon. But his actions were strange. He did not associate with men, preferring the society of his own kind. He also disregarded the Mosaic law of separation. One day one of his wives said to him by way of rebuke, 'How extremely hast thou altered thy custom!' At this he kept silence. Then she said, 'Thou art not Solomon!' At this he left her, and went to the Queen-Mother Bathsheba. In answer to a request of his she cried, 'Thou art not my son!' She fled in fear to Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, and acquainted him with her surmise. At this Benaiah was terrified, and rent his garments. He said, 'God forbid! If this be true, then that is not thy son Solomon, but the demon Ashmedai; and that young man who wanders hither and thither is the

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true Solomon.' Then he went and questioned the women of the harem to know if they had ever seen their supposed husband's feet, for if he were in truth a demon they would be shaped like those of a cock. They replied that they had not, for he invariably kept them covered.

On this Benaiah doubted still more, and sending for the wanderer, he asked him :

'My son, who art thou?'

He answered, 'I am Solomon, the son of David.'

Then said Benaiah, 'My son, what has chanced to thee?'

He replied, 'One day, as I was sitting in my wonted place, there came a mighty gust of wind, and hurled me far away; and ever since that day I was as one bereft of understanding, and I wandered hither and thither.'

Benaiah then asked him for a sign by way of proof, and he replied :

'At the time of my coronation my father placed one of my hands in thine, and the other in that of Nathan the prophet : then my mother kissed my father's head.'

When he found this to be true, Benaiah summoned the members of the Sanhedrin, and directed them to protect themselves with the Most Holy Name, which they were to write on pieces of parchment, and wear over their hearts. Thus fortified, they all suddenly appeared before Ashmedai, who trembled, knowing that the imposture was detected. Benaiah, who accompanied them, drew his sword and smote him. Indeed he would have killed him, had not a Bath Kol (voice from Heaven) cried, 'Touch him not! He did but obey My commands.' And in such a manner was Solomon punished at the instigation of the tiny letter Yōd, and then restored to his throne.[1]

Others say it was an angel from Heaven that assumed Solomon's likeness. According to Rabbi Simon ben Yohai the entire Book of Deuteronomy presented itself before God, and unrolling itself, cried, 'Lord, Thou hast ordained in Thy Law that an act in part annulled is annulled in its entirety. But Solomon desires to destroy me altogether.' God replied, 'Solomon and a thousand like him shall perish before a single letter of the Law fail.'[2]

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But the Mohammedan writers tell the story differently. According to the Persian author, Mirkhond, Solomon's downfall and exile was a punishment for having unwittingly sanctioned idolatry in the palace. He gives it as follows:

It was told King Solomon that in a certain island there was an idolatrous king, Sidūn by name; and as he spent his time in combating the enemies of the True Faith, he commanded the wind to take his carpet with his army upon it, and transport it to the island. There he put the king to death, and made a prisoner of his daughter, who was known for her elegance and beauty. And the heart of King Solomon was filled with love for the princess.

Iblis saw in this an opportunity to bring evil upon the world. He took the shape of one of the nurses of the princess, appeared at the gate of the castle, and asked for admission. Solomon gave permission, and Iblis, having entered, began to deplore to the princess the fall of her father's kingdom, and said to her:

'How canst thou live in peace and friendship with Solomon, seeing that he hath killed thy father, made thee a prisoner, and hath turned thy realm upside-down?' The princess at this began to weep. Iblis asked her how she spent her time, and she answered that her days were passed in grief, and her nights in burning pain. Whereupon he said to her:

'There is a remedy for this! When Solomon visits thee, cease not to weep. If he asks the cause of thy tears, tell him thou art anxious to behold thy father, and beg him to order the Jinns to construct a figure of stone to represent thy father, by looking at which every morning and evening thy sorrowful mind may be comforted.'

This the princess did, and Solomon commanded the Jinns to make the statue. They obeyed, and delivered it to the princess, who had followed idolatry before she associated with Solomon; and she considered this statue to be a great blessing, and began to worship it like an idol in the company of her maid-servants. Solomon knew nothing of this till after forty days, when the rumour spread among the people

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that the princess was worshipping an idol: this was told Asaph, who swore that he would bring it to the king's ears. Therefore he waited on the king, saying:

'O Prophet of God, the weakness of old age hath overtaken me, and before I die I desire in a chosen assembly to explain the virtues and illustrious acts of the prophets, that I may increase the love of the Law among the people.'

Solomon immediately ordered the various tribes of Jinns and men to make their appearance; to whom Asaph narrated the history of the virtues and noble acts of every prophet of past times. When he came to speak about Solomon, he spoke only of the acts which he had performed in his youth, and before the death of his father. Solomon was highly displeased and chagrined by this brevity, and when the people had dispersed he asked Asaph:

'Why didst thou restrict the tale of my deeds to past times, and speak not of any of those vouchsafed to me by God after the time of my father?'

Asaph said, 'I cannot praise any man within whose house idolatry is practised for a space of forty days.'

The king said in astonishment: 'Within *my* house?'

Then Asaph told him all that was being done; whereupon Solomon left the assembly, went to his house, broke the idol, and punished the daughter of King Sidūn. After this he dressed himself in clean clothes, ordered ashes to be strewn in his private apartments, in which he sat down, engaged in lamentations, and sought for pardon.

The conclusion of this incident is taken from a Spanish-Arabic version, which resembles that of Mirkhond, but is fuller in detail. One day, as Solomon was going to perform his devotions, he gave his signet-ring into the charge of a female slave. One of the Jinns, Haritsu by name (Sakhar, in other versions), went to the maiden in the dress and guise of Solomon, obtained the ring from her, and flung it into the Sea of Oman, where it was swallowed by a fish. On his return Solomon demanded his ring from the girl. But she cried, 'God help me! I have given it to thee!'

Then Solomon saw that God was angry with him, and when night came he put on poor clothing, took a staff in

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his hand, and went forth alone. He looked so miserable and pitiable that even the beggars kept aloof from him, and said, 'Go from us! It is because of thee that the people give us scarcely any alms.'

In the meantime the demon Haritsu occupied Solomon's throne, and the people came to him for judgement, but his decisions were against the Law. This they could not understand, so finally one of them, Balkis by name, declared that he would get at the truth of the matter. So he presented himself before the false Solomon with a feigned case, and said:

'O King, I desire to divorce my wife, and to send her back to her father's house. But she demands her *Azidak* (dowry); am I bound to give it to her?'

The demon answered, 'No, for thou canst give it to that woman whom thou takest to wife instead of her.'

Then answered Balkis, 'O King, formerly the judgement was that God said if a man give not his wife the *Azidak* that belongs to her then will his good works be imputed to his wife as she goes into Paradise, while her evil deeds will be imputed to him when he enters Hell.'

'Now if thou knowest that,' replied the demon, 'why hast thou thus demanded my judgement?'

Then answered Balkis, 'Accursed one! How hast thou dared to do this thing? Where is Solomon?' He spoke the word engraved on the ring, and immediately the demon flew away. The people were terror-stricken, but Balkis reassured them, saying, 'He who hath taken away Solomon's might will restore it to him again.'

In the course of his wanderings Solomon came to the land of King Yram (Hiram of Tyre), who was building a great palace, where many men were employed. Solomon went to the overseer, and asked him if he could give him work. 'That I can of a truth!' he replied. He took him into his employment, and allotted to him the task of drawing water from a cistern. At midday Solomon used to repose himself in the shadow of a tower belonging to the palace, in which the king's daughter dwelt. Hard by was a mountain covered with woods, in which were

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many wild beasts. One day, as the princess stood at the window to feel the fresh breeze, she saw him asleep; and as she looked she beheld two lions come down from the mountain, which placed themselves on this side and that of the sleeper, and kept away the gnats and flies from him with their tails. At this sight she was greatly astonished. Then Solomon awoke, and said, 'Extolled be God, the Only One!' And she said to him:

'O man, from whence comest thou?'

He replied, 'From the land of Yemen.'

She asked, 'How canst thou sleep so peacefully in the neighbourhood of this mountain, where lurk so many wild beasts?'

'Maiden,' he replied, 'the wild beasts, and all creation, are in the power of God.' Thereupon he went to his work.

The next day two snakes came to his side, and the third day two eagles, which fanned him with their wings. When he awoke, he said, 'Extolled be God! There is no power or might except with God, the Great, the Exalted!' Then said the king's daughter to him:

'Of this God whom thou extollest, have I not heard before—Who is He?'

Solomon answered, 'To Him belong all things in heaven and earth, in the air, and under the earth.'

She said then, 'I have heard it said that all things obey Solomon. Art thou that Solomon?'

And when he had answered her, she continued: 'Then, O Prophet of God, I have a request to thee. Take me as thy wife, for I desire to renounce my former belief, and to learn of thy God.'

But the king said: 'How if thy father be unwilling?' To which she answered, 'My father hath long since bid me wed whom I will, and he will do as he hath said.'

The princess went to her father, and spoke to him of his promise and of her purpose. He remonstrated with her, but to no effect, and at the end he said, 'I will do as I have said. Thou mayest marry this poor wretch, but in my palace thou shalt not remain, and thou shalt go forth without thy beautiful robes and costly jewels.'

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After she had changed her robes for others she went forth to Solomon, who awaited her in the barn of a ruined house, for the hour was already late.

She said to him : ' O Prophet of God, of what will our evening meal consist ? '

He replied, ' God, who hath given me my subsistence for forty days (the length of his period in exile), will do the same to-day.'

Then she said, ' O Prophet of God, here are two copper *dineros*, all that my father hath left me.'

Solomon took the coins, and with one bought bread and oil. Then he went to some fishermen, and asked them if they would sell him two fish for the other coin. They replied, ' That can we not do, for we are twelve fishermen, and we have only taken twenty-five fish. But yonder is a fish which is worthless ; that canst thou take.' Solomon answered, ' I thank you, my friends. But I have a wife, for whose subsistence I have to make provision, for she desires to accept the True Faith.' One of the fishermen thereupon gave him a fish. Solomon proffered him the *dinero*, but he refused it, saying, ' Keep it ! I have given thee the fish, because thou professest the faith held by Solomon, the Prophet of God.' Solomon answered, ' So may God give thee a place in Paradise among the pious ones ! '

Full of joy he returned to his wife, and gave her the two fish to clean, while he himself performed the evening devotions. When they had seated themselves on the ground, Solomon said, ' O wife, take the good fish ; I will take the other.' She answered, ' I swear that thou must take the good fish, and leave me the other.' As they began to eat, the wife opened her fish, and found within it the ring which the demon Haritsu—may he be accursed !—had flung into the sea. She cried, ' See ! here is a wonder ! ' Solomon took the ring, and exclaimed, ' There is no power or might except with God, the great, the exalted ! '

Then he placed it upon his finger, and immediately there came through the air the Jinns laden with splendid robes and rich food, who in a moment reared a palace for the

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king. Solomon and his wife cast off their rags, and arrayed themselves in the costly garments. Then he caused the fishermen to be brought to him, and bade them eat of the rich viands to their heart's desire. He also sent for King Yram, and when he arrived, and saw all the signs of wealth and power, he said to his daughter, 'I beseech thee to pardon me, and also ask God to pardon me. From henceforth I will confess thy belief. There is no God but the Only God, and Solomon is His Prophet.' Solomon spoke thereupon to him, 'O King, God will forgive thee, and give thee Paradise, for in the excellence of His mercy He guideth whom He will into the right path' (Koran, Sura ii).

Then at Solomon's command a cloud approached, upon which he seated himself, together with his wife and his father-in-law, and in the twinkling of an eye they were conveyed to Jerusalem.[3]

Of the punishment meted out by Solomon after his return to the usurping demon, different accounts are given. According to Mirkhond he ordered the demons to produce Sakhar, and to bring him to his presence together with his followers, and he fettered them and cast them into the sea. Another writer says that he shut up Sakhar in a copper vessel, which he sealed with the ring, and then threw between two rocks in the Lake of Tiberias, where he remains till the day of resurrection. But according to Tabari the Jinn escaped, and hid himself at the bottom of the sea, where the other Jinns could not get him, until after several years a troop of Peris (female Jinns) went to the seashore, and began to weep and lament at the top of their voices. The Jinn, whose name was Shadjar, heard them, and called from the bottom of the ocean, 'What is the matter?' They replied, 'Solomon is dead!' Then the Jinn came out, suspecting nothing, whereupon the Peris seized him and brought him to Solomon, who had him bound between a stone and a piece of iron, and flung again into the sea.[4]

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REFERENCE-NOTES

1. *Jewish Encycl.*, s.v. 'Asmodeus, Solomon'; Hershon, *Genesis with a Talmudical Commentary*, p. 190; Grünbaum, *Beit. z. vergleich. Mythologie aus d. Hagada* (Zeit. der Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesellsch., xxxi, pp. 200, 222, 309); Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, iv, p. 169.

2. *Revue des études juives*, xvii, p. 64.

3. Mirkhond, p. 95; Grünbaum, *Neue Beit. z. sem. Sagenk.*, p. 271. According to the Jews this woman was Naamah the Ammonitess, the mother of Rehoboam (see Wünsche, *Midrasch Ruth Rabba*, p. 79).

4. Mirkhond, p. 100; Migne, ii, col. 869; Tabari, i, p. 453.

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XI

SOLOMON'S DEATH

It is said that after many years the Angel of Death appeared before King Solomon one day, and his appearance was terrifying, for in his head he had six faces.

When the king asked him concerning them, he replied: 'With the face which is turned to the right I watch the souls of the inhabitants of the east; with that turned to the left I watch the men who dwell in the west. The face turned upwards directs its gaze towards the dwellers in heaven. That turned downwards regards the Jinns who dwell in the depths of the earth. That which looks backward watches the nations of infidels. That which looks forward beholds the true believers.'

The king said, 'Must even the angels die?'

The angel answered, 'All that is dies. I must even slay Gabriel and Michael themselves, when God commands me. He alone will remain; and He will ask one day, "To whom does the world belong?" But there will not be a single being left to answer. Then, after a lapse of forty years, the angel Israfil will be restored to life, and will blow the trumpet to summon the dead to arise.'

'Who will be the first of mankind to arise from the tomb?'

'It will be Mohammed the Prophet, who will appear in due course from among the descendants of Ishmael. The angel Israfil, accompanied by Gabriel and other angels, will go to his tomb at Mecca, and will summon him with these words: "O purest and noblest of souls, return to thy immaculate body, and reanimate it!" Then the Prophet will come forth from the tomb, and will shake its dust from his head. And Gabriel will embrace him, give him the winged horse Borak, present him with a banner and a crown which God shall send him, and lead him to Paradise. All

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the rest of mankind will then be restored to life, and will be brought to the land of Palestine for judgement. On that terrible day each one will think only of himself. Adam will cry, "O Lord, save my soul; I do not trouble myself about the fate of Eve or of Abel!" Noah will cry, "O Lord, preserve me from hell, and let Thy will be accomplished on Shem and Ham!" Abraham will say, "O Lord, I do not beseech thee for the salvation of Ishmael or Isaac, but only for my own!" Mohammed alone will pray that God may have mercy on all the faithful. Then the race of men will be conducted to the bridge Sirat, which is composed of seven bridges of such great length that it would take three thousand years to cross each one of them. This bridge is as sharp as a sword-blade, and as slender as a human hair. One-third of it is an ascent, one-third a descent, while the middle third is level. None can enter Paradise except those who can cross the seven bridges in safety. The wicked fall off the first bridge into hell; those who have not observed the law fall off the second; those who have not given alms off the third; those who have not kept the fasts off the fourth; those who have not observed the pilgrimages enjoined on the faithful off the fifth; those who have not done good off the sixth; and those who have not avoided evil off the seventh.'

'When will the Resurrection take place?'

'God only knows, but it will not be until after the advent of Mohammed, the last of the prophets. Before that day the prophet Isa (Jesus), Who is of thy race, will be born and will preach the True Faith. The peoples of Gog and Magog will break down the wall behind which Alexander the Great confined them. The sun will go from west to east, and many strange apparitions will be seen.'

The king said: 'Let me live only until the Temple is finished, for as soon as it is known that I am dead the Jinns will cease from their labours.'

'Thy appointed time is fulfilled, and it is not in my power to grant thee a single second.'

Then said Solomon: 'Follow me, then, into my crystal hall.'

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The Angel of Death accompanied the king into an apartment, the walls of which were constructed of crystal. Solomon uttered a prayer, and, leaning on his staff, begged the Angel to take his soul as he was standing in that position, in order that the Jinns might not be aware of his death. He did so, and the body remained standing for an entire year, until it fell owing to worms having gnawed through the staff. Then the angels took the body, and bore it together with the ring to a secret place until the Resurrection.[1]

The chronicler Tabari states that when Solomon knew that the end of his life was approaching he was wont to go into the unfinished Temple, and there spend one or two months without leaving it, engaged in prayer and adoration. He used even to take his food in the Temple. He always prayed standing, with his head bowed; and when he was seen in this attitude no one dared approach him, either man or Jinn; if one of the latter came near, fire from heaven would destroy him.

Now in the oratory of Solomon there grew each day a tree that was unknown to him. He used to ask each of these, 'What is thy name, and for what wert thou created?' And the tree would reply, 'I have such and such a name, and serve such and such a purpose, with my fruit, or with my shade, or with my smell.' Then Solomon had the tree transplanted, and if it were medicinal he had set down in a book what remedies it produced, or what diseases it healed.

One day he saw a new tree, and asked it the usual questions. It gave the ominous answer, 'For the destruction of the Temple! Make me into a staff, and lean upon me!' The king said, 'No man can destroy this Temple as long as I am alive!' Then he understood that the tree was warning him of his approaching death. So he cut the tree, and made a staff out of it; and in future when he stood in the attitude of prayer he used to lean upon it. He knew that the Temple was far from completion, and that when he was dead the Jinns would not work any longer at it, for they were only kept at labour by the power of the ring. Therefore he

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prayed, 'O God, let my death be unknown to the Jinns, that they may finish the work.' This prayer was answered. For when the end of Solomon's life came he was standing in his wonted attitude of prayer, having the staff between his two hands, and leaning upon it. Then God ordered the Angel of Death to take away his soul, and he did so, leaving the body standing, in which position it remained for an entire year. Consequently any one who came near him saw him apparently alive and in the attitude of prayer, and so did not approach nearer. The Jinns worked night and day in the Temple until it was finished.

But on the very day that Solomon's soul was taken God sent a white ant, and commanded it to eat the staff. It gnawed a little each day; and at the end of a year, just when the Temple was finished, the staff was eaten through, and broke, and the king's body fell to the ground. Then all knew that he was dead, and the Jinns rejoiced that their servitude was at an end.[2]

According to one writer a Jinn, more cunning than his fellows, suspected that Solomon was dead, because he remained so long in the oratory where he was in the habit of praying. Being desirous of finding out, he entered this oratory by one window, and left it by another; but, in his passage, did not hear the voice of the king. He went and told this to the other Jinns. In order to put the matter to the test they procured a certain beetle, which they set at the task of gnawing through the staff, and in this way found that he was really dead. Others say that after the body had fallen to the ground the wise men were desirous of ascertaining the length of time that had elapsed since the moment of death. So they enclosed an ant in a box, with a piece of wood, for twenty-four hours, and from the amount that was eaten in that time they knew how long it had taken to gnaw through the entire staff.[3]

As soon as Solomon's death became known to the Jinns they ceased from performing the tasks allotted. At the present day travellers in the East are shown a huge unfinished stone in the quarries at Baalbec, and others in different parts of the country, which were left half cut by the Jinns

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when they heard that the king was dead. On one hill-top is a large block which was dropped there by a female Jinn as soon as the news reached her.

Another tradition says the Temple was finished because, when Solomon died, the mason-Jinn who was laying the stones was deaf, and did not hear the labourer-Jinns who were carrying the stones saying to him, 'Lord Solomon is dead!' So he commanded them still, saying, 'Bring earth! bring stones!' until the House was built. And had he heard what the labourers were saying, the building of the Temple would never have been ended. While the work was going on Solomon had ordered the Jinns to burn wood to heat the water in the hot springs of Calirrhoë. When he died, the tender of the baths was likewise deaf, and the servants said to him likewise, 'Lord Solomon is dead!' But he did not hear them, and he kept commanding them, 'Bring green and dry wood!' And he still does so, in consequence of which the water of the bath is still hot.[4]

A very different account of Solomon's death is found in a tale from the Ukraine. He knew that he had not long to live, but he did not desire to die, and sought how he might escape from his fate. He learnt that in a certain quarter of the world there was a Mountain of Immortality, and thither he went, hoping that by dwelling on it he might prolong his days. Now at the foot of this mountain there lived a community of monks who had built for themselves a monastery. And on a certain day the Lord said to them, 'Lay aside immediately any work at which ye are labouring, and make a coffin and dig a grave. For Solomon the Wise is coming hither to die.'

In due course Solomon arrived at the monastery. He found the inmates engaged on this work, and asked them what they were doing; and they, not knowing who he was, answered: 'We are making a coffin for Solomon.'

Then he knew that, whatever efforts he might make, he could not escape from death, and said to them: 'Have ye taken his measure for the coffin?' To which they answered that they had not. The king said: 'Measure it then by me, for he and I are of the same height.'

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Accordingly the monks measured the coffin by him. When this was done, they dug a grave, into which they let down the coffin. But the king said: 'Wait a little, and let me see if the grave is the right length.'

So he stretched himself alongside it. 'It is the right length,' he declared. 'Now lower me into the grave.' And when they had done so, he commanded again: 'Now fill in the grave! Ye have no further need to await the coming of Solomon, for I am he!'

There has been much controversy upon the question of Solomon's salvation, and very contradictory opinions have been held. St. Chrysostom and the Greek Fathers generally held that he was saved. With this agrees the *Kebra Nagast.* After relating the incident of Pharaoh's daughter, it says, 'The Lord had compassion on him, and numbered his name, with those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his father David, in the Book of Life which is in heaven.' His repentance, and the sign of forgiveness that was vouchsafed to him, is described in an Armenian document quoting from Ephrem the Syrian: 'Solomon the Wise, after having committed sin and departed from God through the deceits of women, one day, while he sat in his winter-quarters in the house of David his father, remembered the command he gave at his dying hour, and thereupon he went into his room, and wept sore before the Lord, and vowed that he would weep until the door of the room should open by itself; though there are some who say he vowed that he would weep until the door should be shut by itself. But the opening is a proper sign of the opening of the door of God's mercy, as it also happened, for the door of the room opened by itself, and he walked out.' The opinion that he was admitted into heaven as a prophet, though after forty years, has already been quoted. Dante places him in Paradise, and speaks of him as follows: 'The fifth lustre, the most brilliant among us, is inspired with such holy love, that all the underworld is ardently desirous to know his state.' These last words evidently refer to the disputed question of his salvation. Dante's Jewish contemporary,

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Immanuel ben Solomon Romi, in his *Tophet and Eden*, places him without hesitation with other Old Testament saints and worthies.

On the other hand, St. Augustine and the Latin Fathers pronounced against his salvation. With this agreed some of the Jewish Doctors. Once the members of the Great Synagogue proposed including him among those denied a share in the future life. As they were debating this, the ghost of David appeared, imploring them not to give an adverse decision. This vision was unheeded, as was also a fire from heaven, which licked threateningly the seats on which they were sitting. Finally a Bath Kol (voice of the Spirit) forbade them to do as they had proposed. When Rabbi Eliezer was once asked his opinion on the matter, he gave an evasive answer to his pupils, showing that he had formed no opinion. Lastly, a curious late story connects him with the Wild Huntsman, on whom the curse of a deathless existence has come. One Easter Sunday King Solomon went to Mass, leaving his hound at the church door. Suddenly, as the benediction was being given, a hare sprang across the way, and the hound set after him baying loudly. The king thereupon seized his gun, and left the church in order to catch the hound. In punishment for this irreverence he was condemned to hunt with his pack every night, and on stormy nights he can be heard raging in the clouds.[6]

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2. Tabari, i, p. 455.
3. Mirkhond, p. 103; Baring-Gould, *Legends of O. T. Characters*, ii, p. 206.
4. Hanauer, *Folklore of Holy Land*, pp. 50, 74; Quarterly Statement (P. E. F.), January 1909, p. 39.
5. *Revue des traditions populaires*, ii, p. 513. A somewhat similar account of the death and burial of Moses is in Weil, *Biblical Legends*, p. 142.
6. Hastings, *Dict. of the Bible*, iv, p. 567; Issaverdens, p. 146; Dante, *Paradiso*, x (O'Donnell's trans.); H. Gollancz, *Tophet and Eden*, pp. 62, 75; *Jewish Encycl.*, s.v. 'Solomon'; Dähnhardt, *Natursagen*, i, p. 336.

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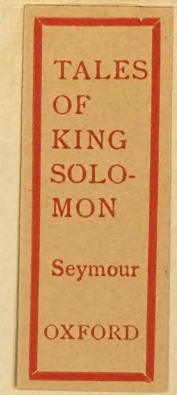

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